

II

From 48er Radicalism to a Working-Class Press

The era of the Civil War marked an important time of transition for German-American radicalism. While there were earlier examples of radical German-language newspapers in the United States, émigrés from the failed German revolution of 1848 dominated the German-American radical community's institution-building in the 1850s. The radicalism of the 48ers, however, was rooted in artisan republicanism and free thought; concern for democracy and anticlericalism predominated, not distress over a system of class exploitation through capitalist wage labor.

The experiences and rhetoric of the Civil War transformed German-American radicalism and its press. The 48ers played an important role in introducing concepts of free labor and antislavery to the German-American working class, but the onerous and uneven burdens placed on workers by the war gave the call for free soil and free labor a hollow ring. In the process, German workers began building their own community institutions and developing different conceptions about their political and economic interests. The emergence of a labor movement in cities like Chicago and Philadelphia called into question the basic tenets of 48er radicalism.

In the immediate postwar years, the leadership of the German-American radical press changed hands. Many 48ers joined sides with ethnic power brokers and immigrant community business leaders, while German-American labor activists created their own distinctive radical newspapers. The shift of the radical press from its role in ethnic community-building to one of building a mass-based, working-class

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movement was never complete, however. In many cities, like Philadelphia, German-American radicals continued the complex process of interweaving class and ethnicity.

Franz Schmidt and the *Freie Blätter* of St. Louis, 1851–53

At the end of March 1853, a foreigner was carried to his grave in Matanzas, Cuba, to the tolling of church bells and the chanting of a priest. To an informed onlooker it must have seemed a cruel joke that the man being buried in Caribbean soil had been a vocal enemy not only of Catholicism but of all religions.¹ Franz Schmidt's departure from this earth had the pathetic qualities of a scene out of an overheated anticlerical novel of the 1850s.

The brief and stormy life of Franz Schmidt has yet to find its chronicler, but at least its provocative outlines are clear.² Born in Niedersaltzbrunn in Upper Silesia on November 28, 1818, Schmidt came to radical politics out of religious commitment, and there are indications that he remained essentially a religious thinker to the end of his life. Born and raised in the multiethnic province of Silesia, the former seminarian Schmidt set himself apart from most German radicals through his ability to sympathize with the Polish national revival as well as with the interests of exploited workers, so much so that in 1845 he was designated by Prussian officials as a dangerous adherent to the Polish cause as well as a communist.³ After a period as a private teacher in the household of a Polish nationalist nobleman in the Prussian-ruled Grand Duchy of Posen (Poznan), Schmidt accepted a position in Löwenberg in Lower Silesia as a preacher for the burgeoning German-Catholic (*Deutschkatholisch*) movement, which was emerging as a major force in Silesia under the leadership of Johannes Ronge. The Silesian weavers' revolt of 1844 had caused many to pose basic critical questions about the existing political and economic system, and the rationalist German-Catholic movement addressed some

of these questions of social and political enlightenment under the guise of a "modern Christianity." Schmidt had already been a member of a Silesian socialist group since the start of 1844, and belonged to the German-Catholic movement from its beginning.

In a period when Prussian authorities were reluctant to suppress plausible religious movements, political agitation could proceed through German-Catholic parishes, but this approach eventually became too limited for many of the participants, who soon evolved into political revolutionaries or cultural freethinkers. Ronge, for example, would become a leading member of the democratic exile leadership in London after 1849.⁴ While working in the German-Catholic movement, Schmidt also served as the principal link between the small but active band of Silesian socialists and the leadership of the League of Communists (Bund der Kommunisten) in Brussels.⁵ Whether as a preacher in the German-Catholic movement, which he tried to push in a socialist direction, or as a correspondent in reformist journals in Breslau and western Germany, Franz Schmidt was an important voice on the left in Silesia.⁶ By 1846 at the latest, he was corresponding directly with the leaders of the communist league, whose secretary, Wilhelm Wolff, was a fellow Silesian and an old friend.⁷ His association with proletarian socialists was remarkable since, like most socialists in Silesia at the time, he followed the so-called true socialism, an idealistic petit bourgeois socialist ideology espoused by Karl Gruen, Moses Hess, and their followers. This approach was denigrated by the followers of proletarian socialism, most notably by Marx and Engels in the *German Ideology* of 1846 and the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848.⁸

Following the popular upheavals of March 1848, Schmidt was elected to the National Assembly, which commenced its sessions at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt in May of that year. There Schmidt (commonly known as Schmidt of Löwenberg to distinguish him from others of his common surname) became one of the most vocal of the radicals gathered in the so-called Donnersberg party, and he won particular notoriety on July 25 by denouncing the Prussian government's cynical misrepresentation of the actual ethnic composition of Posen, which he knew by personal experience to be largely Polish rather than German.⁹ Here Schmidt was taking a brave stand indeed against German nationalist chauvinism, a conviction found at all points in the political spectrum from left to right. In October Schmidt was threatened with bodily harm by a conservative during a session of the assembly.¹⁰ Later, when the left split at Frankfurt over the offer of the imperial crown to the king of Prussia, Schmidt sided with the more radical members who favored a constitutional state without a hereditary monarch.¹¹

By March of 1849, Schmidt was writing directly to Karl Marx, and by 1850 his friend Wilhelm Wolff was able to describe Schmidt to Marx as "to be regarded as one of us" even though he "had not been initiated" into the inner group of the league. Wolff urged that Schmidt be given missions to perform when he arrived in America in 1850, where he was headed once his exile in Zurich, due to the general expulsion of German radicals after 1848, proved untenable.¹² Schmidt, using the code name Theseus, continued to write to Wolff and other members of the league leadership while living in St. Louis. These letters are preserved in the manuscript collections of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism in Berlin and in the Central Party Archives in Moscow.¹³

Once in St. Louis, Franz Schmidt and his wife established a school for girls, and Schmidt even invited Wilhelm Wolff to come to St. Louis to join the faculty of his "Young Ladies' Academy" at Fifth and Elm. This school was certainly a success in attracting the elite of St. Louis German freethinker society, including girls from the Anheuser and Taussig families.¹⁴ But it appears that Marx and Engels had only a vague notion of what Schmidt was up to after his arrival in St. Louis. As Engels wrote from Manchester to Joseph Weydemeyer in New York at the end of February 1852: "Schmidt of Löwenberg is waging crusades against the Jesuits in the area of St. Louis, and in this enterprise he has allied himself with that former swindler and agent of [French Interior Minister Charles-Marie Tanneguy] Duchâtel, Mr. Börnstein of Paris memory. What else he is doing I have not a clue."¹⁵

What he was about in St. Louis, besides teaching school, was editing a newspaper under the aegis of Heinrich Börnstein (Henry Börnstein), a man who had as many enemies as the lovable Schmidt had friends. Heinrich Börnstein's life was both long and well recorded.¹⁶ Born in Hamburg in 1805, he moved at an early age with his parents to his father's native Galizia, where he was raised. After a stint in the Austrian army, Börnstein made a career in the theater, where he also demonstrated considerable talents as a theatrical manager and a writer of popular plays. Arriving in Paris in the first flush of its Bohemian period in the 1840s, he specialized in the translation of French plays for performance in German-speaking Europe, though he also began a secondary career as a journalist. In 1844 he launched a cultural weekly called *Vorwärts! Pariser Signale aus Kunst, Wissenschaft, Theater, Musik und geselligem Leben*. Rather early in the publication of this cultural weekly, however, Börnstein made a sudden lurch to the left by taking on a cohort of noted German emigrant radicals. These included the poet Heinrich Heine along with most of the contributors to the short-lived *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*,¹⁷ among them Karl Marx,

Friedrich Engels, Arnold Ruge, and Karl Ludwig Bernays.¹⁸ In early 1845 the journal was suppressed by French authorities. Börnstein later helped to organize the Paris German Legion to aid the German 1848 revolution, which did not improve the regard in which Marx and his following held him—as hopelessly petit bourgeois in his politics and utterly untrustworthy as a person. He left France in early 1849 after the election of Louis Napoléon as president of France, to join Bernays, who had already gone to St. Louis.

No bedraggled refugee, Börnstein brought with him twenty-two chests filled with every imaginable item necessary for a civilized life. After an interlude in the Swiss community of Highland, Illinois, as a pharmacist and allopathic physician, Börnstein was called to St. Louis in early 1850 to assume the editorship of the *Anzeiger des Westens*, and although he proclaimed himself to be a public educator only interested in elevating the cultural level of the immigrant community, he soon earned a reputation as an anti-Catholic agitator.¹⁹ To boost circulation of the *Anzeiger* and to promote an alliance between American nativists and German radicals, he undertook to write and publish a sensational anti-Jesuit serial novel entitled *The Mysteries of St. Louis, Or, The Jesuits on the Prairie des Noyers, A Western Tale*.²⁰ It was dedicated to former United States senator Thomas Hart Benton, who would be Börnstein's candidate for the House of Representatives in 1852. This potboiler would go through many editions in German and would also be translated into French, English, and Czech.²¹ Börnstein later claimed that the novel was the foundation for a career in Missouri which would flourish until he broke with the Frémont radicals in 1862, a political decision which precipitated the collapse of his St. Louis businesses in 1863, while he was in Bremen serving as United States consul. He never returned to America, and he died in Austria in 1892.

While Börnstein was still publishing the first parts of *The Mysteries*, on March 18, 1851, Franz Schmidt launched his own weekly, *Freie Blätter*, published by Börnstein's printing company. The *Freie Blätter* is our major source of information on what freethinker St. Louis was doing in the early 1850s, and for a while it was considered one of the leading freethinker publications in German North America.²² It would continue publication until March 5, 1853, shortly before its editor's death from tuberculosis in Matanzas, Cuba, where he had gone in a futile effort to regain his health.²³

Schmidt prefaced the first issue of the weekly, subtitled *Ein Organ für religiöse Erklärung*, with a forthright statement of first principles, a "Creed" of eight points which affirmed belief in an eternal material nature operating without external agencies, a possible multiplicity of

inhabited planets, and the preeminent dignity of mankind as the apex of nature. Consequently, there could be no higher crime than to degrade human dignity. The creed said further that humanity had been called to order and harmony, not to perpetual conflict, but that history consisted of the progressive struggle of mankind against oppression, with the ultimate goal of order, harmony, and freedom to be realized only in the future. Christianity, which at one time had been an advance over earlier belief-systems, was outmoded, and the Bible, upon which Christianity rested, was a dubious and partisan document. Lastly, the nineteenth century was the time of mankind's final liberation.²⁴ This progressive vision of the process of nature was utopian rather than Marxist, and the shrinking away from serious politics which would characterize Schmidt's St. Louis years is already visible. Still, this "Creed" kept him in trouble with pious St. Louis for the rest of his life there.

Also at the beginning of the first issue of the journal, Schmidt declared that the presence of a constitution and binding laws approved by the people was not the essence of freedom but only its precondition. True liberation required genuine freedom of thought, which grew out of being freed from the domination of clergy and other dictators. Instead of freedom of religion, people needed a religion of freedom. The *Freie Blätter*, for its part, would avoid personalities and parties and instead "let principle struggle with principle, ideal with ideal, philosophy with philosophy." Above all, there were to be no personal attacks.²⁵ This philosophy seems to have struck a chord; the immediate success of the weekly is reflected in the fact that the press run was raised from one thousand to fifteen hundred copies, and that a condensed reprint of the first eight numbers was soon issued.²⁶ There is every indication that the journal had a wide circulation, even if it would never be a financial success.

The *Freie Blätter* subjected its St. Louis environment to a sharp critique, especially when it reflected the spirit of its companion organization, the Verein Freier Männer,²⁷ always from the starting point of anticlericalism. The absence of formal censorship in America, for example, did not appear to Schmidt automatically to result in free expression, since overwhelming public pressure for conformity achieved the same results as a centralized censorship, sometimes with greater ruthlessness and efficiency. Self-censored minds thus made a police state superfluous.²⁸ Religious institutions in America were seen as primary organs of social discipline and hence of self-censorship. Such an argument also shows that the articles in the *Freie Blätter* were aimed at a more literate audience than that which followed the daily press,

so that readers were expected to work through rather technical essays on electricity or exposés of arcane religious fraud through the ages. Although editorially distinct, the *Freie Blätter* was produced from the same building as the *Anzeiger*, and the close ties between the two journals were never a secret. The *Anzeiger* concentrated on garden-variety anticlericalism, but the *Freie Blätter* handled those items which were too hot even for the scandalmonger Börnstein to set in type, engaging in anti-Christian polemics and the lampooning of Christian scriptures. The paper even denounced the Thanksgiving Day proclamation of the governor of Missouri on one occasion.²⁹

The result was that the paper engaged in 'head-to-head confrontations with clerical writers in the Catholic *Sonntagsblatt* or the *Tages-Chronik*, but the most violent wars were reserved for the Lutheran leader C. F. W. Walther, editor of *Der Lutheraner*, and his followers.³⁰ In one such dispute, a seminarian from Concordia Seminary published an anonymous pamphlet denouncing the "Fleshly Religion of the Free Men."³¹ When all other arguments failed, Schmidt denigrated the pamphlet's author as a mere Stephanite, the dregs of the German emigration and a scandal to all decent moral men, adding that the Old Lutherans were a moral sump which stank even worse than the St. Louis levee on a hot day.³² Such censoriousness moved even the intellectual leader of the older Missouri immigration, Friedrich Münch, to voice his misgivings about the stridently anti-Christian tone of much of the paper. Schmidt replied to this firmly, though with more courtesy than he could usually muster when dealing with a critic.³³ He was, after all, addressing one who was already a noted member of the rationalist community.

Beginning at the end of 1851, Schmidt began to give exposure to the writings of Karl Heinzen.³⁴ An old enemy of the Marxists,³⁵ and the German-American heir of the "true socialists" of ancient memory, he was for a long time the chief writer and speaker of the left in German-America, and his militant refusal to go along with the ordinary political process justified Carl Wittke's title of the biography of Heinzen, *Against the Current*.³⁶ Most pointedly, Schmidt launched this campaign with a critique by Heinzen of the writings of Friedrich Münch (under his pen name of Far West), featuring Heinzen's "Letters to a Reasonable Man" as responses to Münch's "Letters to a Pious Man."³⁷ In the middle of the next year, however, Heinzen became a major contributor with protocols of speeches made in a major lecture tour which included stops in Hermann, Missouri, and St. Louis.³⁸ Heinzen's final series for *Freie Blätter* parallels Schmidt's and the paper's own development, re-

flecting both his earlier polemic with Münch and the more exclusively religious stress of Schmidt's last days, "To a Pious Man."³⁹

Within ten days after the first publication of the *Freie Blätter*, a new organization was launched which came to be intimately tied to it, for good or ill. In his memoirs, Börnstein recalled that he had received a note from a young German freethinker named Brossart who claimed that he was being held prisoner in the Jesuit house (the Saint Stanislaus Seminary—today a museum of the Jesuit Order) in Florissant.⁴⁰ Börnstein claimed that he dissuaded a German mass meeting from launching a raid on the Jesuits by proposing the creation of a "Verein freier Männer" on March 28, 1851. In actual fact, the Brossart episode was already over at least a week before the gathering in question, though the atmosphere of agitation certainly contributed to the sense of urgency which possessed the German freethinkers.⁴¹ The first meeting of this new association appointed a committee, which included Schmidt and Börnstein, to draw up a statement of purposes, a statement which proclaimed a love of the true spirit of American liberty while warning of the threat to that liberty from clerical religion. During the deliberations, a participant specifically lauded both the *Anzeiger des Westens* and the *Freie Blätter* for furthering the cause of free thought.⁴² On May 12 the assembled members of the Verein elected Schmidt as president and Börnstein corresponding secretary, and it was decided to hold meetings on Sundays alternately in north and south St. Louis, since there was no convenient place to meet in the central area, where few Germans resided.⁴³ Schmidt was reelected president in November, at which time a formal association of the Verein with the *Freie Blätter* was approved by the membership.⁴⁴ Despite internal dissent over the cost of building two school buildings (founded in July 1851) and other difficulties over common finances,⁴⁵ Schmidt was elected yet again as president in April 1852, with his friend Carl Muegge as vice president.⁴⁶ It is thus proper that his posthumous portrait shows him as president of the Verein Freier Männer of St. Louis.

Although Börnstein did not hold a regular position as a major officer with the Verein after the first few months, he continued to be regarded by English-speaking outsiders as the evil genius behind what was taken to be a conspiracy against all good morals.⁴⁷ The mouthpiece of the St. Louis Whig establishment, the *Missouri Republican*, could see little good in what it called "The Association of Free Men." After rejecting the notion that a gathering of even four to five hundred men could be taken to represent a diverse German population of about thirty thousand, the *Republican* suggested that the group was

all too obviously a clique for the *Anzeiger des Westens*, the *Freie Blätter*, and Heinrich Wilhelm Gempp's *German American*. It was not clear whether the gathering was more for "Socialism, Red Republicanism or Infidelity," since the association supported all of them at once. In any case, the "Free Men" obviously were anti-Whig in their local politics, and that helped place them beyond the pale.⁴⁸ The intimate connection of the *Freie Blätter* and the *Anzeiger* (both published by the *Anzeiger*, together with the bilingual *German American* and the French *Moniteur de l'Ouest*)⁴⁹ was given particularly dramatic visual form reported by a horrified *Republican*:

The society of Free Men is a society whose leading spirit is Boernstein, whose organs are the *Freie Blätter* and the *Anzeiger*; whose liberty is freedom from restraint; whose business is to war against all religion. Those who wish to see their aims and objects shadowed forth on paper, can do so by stepping into a beer-house in the city. There they will see posted up in a conspicuous place an engraving, in which the world is seen rolling through space—the continent north America being uppermost. Standing alone in the midst of this continent, and "monarch of all he surveys," a figure (perhaps Boernstein,) with a standard in his hand, from the top of which floats as banners the *Freie Blätter* and *Anzeiger*, while grim figures, intended to represent Catholicism, Presbyterianism, and all other religions, with Satan and the Bible in the midst, are flying in terror before him into the region of outer darkness.⁵⁰

Despite opposition from outside, the *Freie Blätter* seems to have functioned quietly if not smoothly in its role as the official organ of the Verein from July 1851 until late April 1852, when internal dissent over the financial management of the Verein became public.⁵¹ At a special meeting on July 30, Börnstein, who had just recently been elected to the school committee, and Schmidt confronted the Verein with a bill of complaints about its failure to provide financial support to the *Freie Blätter*. Börnstein also rejected what he described as a false report on audits of the southern Freimänner-Schule.⁵² On August 10, in another special meeting of the Verein, Schmidt presented the report of the majority of the school committee, which revealed that the disputes over financing the schools had not been laid to rest.⁵³ The losing side in this dispute, a full thirty-two members, soon brought a petition against Schmidt and other officers and members for violating the constitution of the association.⁵⁴ The upshot of this confrontation was that Schmidt and Börnstein broke the formal ties between the *Freie Blätter* and the association, so that all mention of the Verein disappeared from the masthead of the paper after September 11, 1852. Börnstein and Schmidt made a joint announcement that members of the Verein had

never lived up to their commitment to provide monetary support for the paper, and that the two of them had each lost over one thousand dollars keeping the journal going.

This public divorce of the *Freie Blätter* from the Verein went hand in hand with the organization's progressive disintegration. Although an investigation cleared Schmidt and Börnstein, as well as two other officers, of charges of mismanaging society funds, the formal tie between the paper and the association would never be restored.⁵⁵ In fact, in October the dissidents in the association, led by Martin Nau and Peter Pellizzaro, obtained a court order to seize control of the two school buildings.⁵⁶ In a bitter reprise of the conflict, Schmidt argued that it all arose from his and Börnstein's refusal to countenance political partisanship by the association in 1851, particularly the "National Reform" movement and the German revolutionary national loan. Schmidt darkly hinted that some of the accusers did not have their private lives entirely in order and were given to mistreating dogs and small children.⁵⁷ (Börnstein led a meeting in the northern schoolhouse on October 10 to choose a new head teacher for one of the schools after the previous one had been removed for unspecified moral failings.)⁵⁸ After the organization was refounded, with a new constitution and bylaws, the general assembly of the Verein elected Franz Schmidt as president yet again, with Muegge as vice president. Several officers and members of the dissident group were formally expelled.⁵⁹

Schmidt and Börnstein had thus ostensibly rejected efforts to turn the Verein into a politically partisan group, despite the fact that Börnstein was concurrently deeply involved in getting both Germans and Americans of proper persuasions elected to public office. Members of the association occasionally marched at public demonstrations, most notably at a commemoration for the failure of a putsch in Cuba in early autumn of 1851. The English-language papers observed with distaste that the procession had taken place on a Sunday.⁶⁰ In July 1852, however, a request that the Verein participate in the commemorative procession for Henry Clay was grudgingly accepted lest it offend the (English-speaking) public, but it was agreed that such activities were not a good idea in the future.⁶¹

In the aftermath of the crisis of late 1852, the group appeared to lose much of its tone. The two schools established in 1851–52 were still operating at the end of 1852, although soon the buildings would be redeveloped as public schools after the Verein itself dissolved.⁶² By the mid-1850s the dramatic society established by Börnstein in conjunction with the Verein had found a new home at the Freie Gemeinde of North St. Louis, a similar freethinker organization that survived the

immigration period as a center of neighborhood life and continued to flourish into the twentieth century.⁶³

One of the most significant episodes of the period in which the *Freie Blätter* had served as the mouthpiece of the Verein was its brief support for an English-speaking socialist group. In mid-1851 formal cooperation between the Verein and the English-speaking group called the Social Reformers had been ushered in by exchanges of greetings,⁶⁴ but by the autumn this connection had grown to include the publication in the *Freie Blätter* of a series of tracts in English, followed by German translations, which advocated reforms to reverse the overconcentration of wealth in the hands of the few.⁶⁵ These articles meticulously examined the structure and volatility of property-holding in St. Louis, demanded an expansion of workers' cooperatives and restriction of the use of professional lawyers in public courts, and discussed the need for sexual equality, education for women, and the liberalization of marriage laws. In letters to the journal, other members of the Social Reform Association attacked the readiness of the clergy to defend capital and reject self-help by labor. The publication of articles by the Social Reformers went together with the experiment of using the Verein schools as centers of tricultural progressive education, bringing together Anglo-American, German, and French-speaking Creole children.⁶⁶ The Verein declared itself ready to provide the columns of its paper to the Social Reformers until they could afford to publish their own journal.⁶⁷ This episode of progressive political agitation was relatively short-lived, however; it appears that Schmidt published these daring and revealing articles only at the request of the Verein.

When Börnstein and Schmidt gave up the pretense of acting as the organ of the Verein, such essays as those of the Social Reformers ceased at once. On his own, Schmidt appeared to prefer to discuss the wonders of modern science, questions of pedagogy (notably the ideas of Jacotot and Froebel), and the stupidities of revealed religion. The shortage of adequate textbooks based on freethinker principles moved Schmidt to publish materials in the *Freie Blätter* which could be used in schools. In fact, such discussion of a rational pedagogy based on nonsectarian principles would be revived after the American Civil War by the so-called St. Louis Movement, a gathering of German and American devotees of Hegelian and transcendentalist thought around Henry Brockmeyer. Both the refounder of the St. Louis public schools, William Torrey Harris, and Susan Blow, who introduced the Froebel principles to the first public school kindergarten, were unconsciously following a path first explored in St. Louis by Franz Schmidt.

Articles later in 1852 also tended to focus on the peculiar doctri-

nal concerns of rationalism, including articles by Karl Lüdeking, a protégé of Schmidt who would become the guiding spirit of the Freie Gemeinde of North St. Louis into the 1880s and would represent all the Free Congregations of the United States at an international assembly of freethinkers in Naples in 1870.⁶⁸

The "cultural" stress of the *Freie Blätter* caused it serenely to ignore current political events, so that Börnstein's abortive demands in 1851 for a German political party in St. Louis which would demand parity for German office-holders were left unmentioned,⁶⁹ as was the epoch-making struggle in 1851 and 1852 for Benton Democracy, which for the first time established Free-Soil principles as a winning formula in Missouri.⁷⁰ (This in turn would lay the groundwork for the Missouri Republican party, the chief political instrument of the overthrow of the Missouri state government in 1861.) None of these matters would ever surface in the *Freie Blätter*.

In the *Freie Blätter* of January 15, 1853, an article by Börnstein reprinted from the *Anzeiger des Westens* bade Franz Schmidt farewell on the morrow of his departure for Matanzas, Cuba, to spend the winter. Schmidt's tuberculosis had been plaguing him for years, so much so that he had hesitated to accept an invitation to present the keynote address at the dedication of the hall of the Freie Gemeinde von Nord-St. Louis in July 1851, due to his chronic poor health.⁷¹ Now Börnstein formally took over editing the *Freie Blätter* during Schmidt's absence, and Schmidt's wife assumed leadership of his girls' school.⁷² Thereafter, until its last number on March 5, 1853 (vol. 2, no. 51), the paper simply reprinted materials from other freethinker journals.

A week after the appearance of the last issue of the *Freie Blätter*, the weekly *Anzeiger* printed the first installment of a promised series of letters from Schmidt, who was then serving as a sort of overseas correspondent in Cuba. The first three letters described his harrowingly difficult winter journey down the Mississippi by riverboat and from New Orleans to Havana by ship, finally reaching his goal in Matanzas by carriage. There he had settled in for a "sugar-juice cure" of his illness in the plantation house of acquaintances (Plagge and Biranyi, both old friends of Carl Muegge) who managed a sugar refinery for a German owner. His account communicated a personal warmth and humor which all too seldom animated his published St. Louis writings but which had won him many loyal friends through the years. At one point he began to complain about the heavy Spanish duties on imported goods, but caught himself in mid-thought and wrote, "But stop—no politics!"⁷³

On April 17, 1853, the *Anzeiger des Westens* was headed by a notice

edged in black announcing that Schmidt had succumbed to his tuberculosis in the morning hours of March 29, 1853. Although his state of health had seemed to improve somewhat in the warmth of the Cuban winter, his mind had lost its edge. On the night before his death, Börnstein wrote, Schmidt had been possessed by the conviction that his wife was on her way to visit him, and he had attempted to dress to go to meet her. It was only with difficulty that he was dissuaded from his notion, and he returned to his bed and died quietly about 5 A.M. Börnstein, genuinely moved for once in his life, mourned his lost friend as an "enthusiastic German Republican, one of the most decisive representatives of the people on the left in the Frankfurt Paulskirche, an unshaken fighter for truth and light."⁷⁴

Almost a month later, in a letter dated April 12, the absurd conclusion to this story was recounted: Spanish officials had threatened Schmidt's friends with dire consequences if they did not pay for a full Catholic funeral for the dead German. His body would otherwise have been thrown into a ditch in the manner reserved for atheists and heretics, or delivered to the tender mercies of the police. Thus "that most unshakeable and yet lovable atheist, the most dangerous foe of catholicism, the editor of the *Freie Blätter*, the flaming German radical" was laid to rest to the strains of the *Dies irae*. His clothes, watch, rings, and papers fell to the *Alcalde*, since Schmidt was a foreigner dying alone in a far land. His wife and children received nothing.⁷⁵

The largely complete file⁷⁶ of the *Freie Blätter* preserved at the St. Louis Public Library constitutes a valuable resource for our understanding of the tensions and contradictions within progressive emigrant circles in the American Midwest in the period before the rise of the militant nativism of the mid-1850s. Although this group engaged in virtually pro forma polemics with Catholics and Lutherans, they appear to have become the best of enemies. The true trouble was to be found within the circle of the freethinkers, since there were those who saw "enlightenment" in strictly cultural and "spiritual" terms, while others were seeking to make it an instrument for changing the very bases of human existence. With the exception of their brief, obviously reluctant, opening to the Social Reform Association, Börnstein and Schmidt appear to have been uncomfortable with any serious questioning of the existing social and economic system. Whatever politically radical convictions either Börnstein or Schmidt might once have harbored tended to fade in the face of concrete American conditions. As for Franz Schmidt, the former Silesian preacher returned to his first loves of rationalism, ethics, and education in his brief sojourn on the

banks of the Mississippi. His premature death in Cuba left a gap in the ranks of German-America which was never to be filled.

NOTES

1. *Anzeiger des Westens*, weekly edition, vol. 18, no. 28, May 14, 1853, p. 4, letter dated Apr. 12 from Matanzas.

2. I want to thank Prof. Dr. Walter Schmidt, formerly Director of the Zentralinstitut für Geschichte bei der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Berlin, for his helpful criticism of an earlier version of this paper, and for his kindness in sending me materials not readily available to me in St. Louis.

3. Walter Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Sein Weg*, pp. 123–24, n. 12, report of the Posen district president to the Interior Ministry, May 1, 1845.

4. *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 2d ed., 3:279, 9:38. Walter Schmidt, *Wilhelm Wolff: Kampfgefährte*, p. 31: "The German Catholic movement played a special role in almost all of the letters [from Franz Schmidt to Wolff]. This movement was a specifically religious form of the bourgeois opposition against the ruling conditions in Vormärz, which had found an outlet in Silesia and also was disseminated widely here" [trans. eds.]. On Ronge, see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Die grossen Männer des Exils," *Werke*, 8:233–333, esp. pp. 306–7.

5. Schmidt, Wolff: *Sein Weg*, p. 226.

6. Schmidt, Wolff: *Sein Weg*, pp. 187–88.

7. Schmidt, Wolff: *Sein Weg*, esp. pp. 119, 123–24, 187–89, 288–89; and Wolff: *Kampfgefährte*, p. 22.

8. Schmidt, Wolff: *Sein Weg*, pp. 183–87. On "true socialism," see Friedrich Engels, "Zwei Aufsätze über die 'wahren' Sozialisten," in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 4:205–90; and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei," *Werke*, 4:485–88; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*, pp. 79–193.

9. Günther Hildebrandt, *Die Paulskirche in der Revolution*, pp. 120–21 (Hildebrandt erroneously gives Schmidt's age as only twenty-three in 1848 [p. 47], but he was born in 1818); for Friedrich Engels's comment on Schmidt's speech, see Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 5:350.

10. Hildebrandt, *Die Paulskirche in der Revolution*, p. 169.

11. Hildebrandt, *Die Paulskirche in der Revolution*, p. 256.

12. Schmidt, Wolff: *Kampfgefährte*, pp. 226, 252.

13. Schmidt, Wolff: *Kampfgefährte*, pp. 252, 263 and notes on letters of "Theseus" to Wolff of Dec. 16 and 28, 1850, see *Zeitgenossen von Marx und Engels*, which demonstrates that "Theseus" was Franz Schmidt. One letter from Schmidt to Wolff (Dec. 28, 1850) is reproduced in *Land ohne Nachtigall. Deutsche Immigranten in Amerika, 1777–1886*, ed. Rolf Weber, pp. 159–68, 436–37.

14. See *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 40, Dec. 13, 1851, p. 317, program of Öffent-

liche Schulprüfung for Dec. 23, 1851, including mention of students Lilly Anheuser, the heiress of the Anheuser Brewery and later wife of Adolphus Busch, as well as Minna Taussig.

15. Engels to Joseph Weydemeyer, Feb. 27, 1852, in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 28:500. On Duchâtel, see Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 8:691.

16. Besides the published materials cited in the literature, there are about fifty letters, poems, and manuscripts listed concerning Börnstein in the Archiv der Stadt Wien. See also Robert E. Cazden, *Social History of the German Book Trade in America*, p. 221.

17. For a complete reprint of this volume, see Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx, *Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher*; see the condescending remarks in Heinrich Börnstein, *Fünfundsiebzig Jahre*, 1:349: "I mention this only because nowadays hardly any examples of this literary curiosity can be rummaged up, and much of the content still is of value" [trans. eds.].

18. *Vorwärts*, Unveränderter Neudruck; see the detailed preface by Walter Schmidt.

19. Erich P. Hofacker, *German Literature as Reflected in the German-Language Press*, on the publication program of Börnstein. See Steven Rowan, "Cultural Program of Heinrich Börnstein."

20. *Anzeiger des Westens*, vol. 16, no. 100, Feb. 16, 1851, first installment of *Die Geheimnisse von St. Louis*, last excerpt was no. 206, June 20, 1851. See Cazden, *Social History of the German Book Trade in America*, pp. 391–92. The English translation of the book was by Friedrich Münch. A modern edition is available, edited by Steven Rowan and Elizabeth Sims (Henry Boernstein, *The Mysteries of St. Louis*.)

21. Patricia Herminghouse, "Radicalism and the 'Great Cause,'" largely on *The Mysteries of St. Louis*. For other references to Börnstein, see esp. *Germans for a Free Missouri*, pp. 37–41, and Alfred Vagts, "Heinrich Boernstein, Ex- and Repatriate"; generally, one should always look at George Hellmuth Kellner, *German Element on the Urban Frontier*. As if to prove that bigotry knows no country, one of the central scenes of *The Mysteries*, in which the superiors of the Jesuits meet at midnight on Bloody Island in the Mississippi River to plot the overthrow of the American republic, might have been the ultimate model for the infamous anti-Semitic *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The model for the *Protocols* which Norman Cohn has fingered (the chapter "In the Jewish Cemetery of Prague" of the novel *Biarritz* [1868], by Hermann Goedsche, whose pen name was Sir John Retcliffe) would not be published until almost two decades later (Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, pp. 32–40). It is altogether probable that Goedsche was familiar with Börnstein's work.

22. Robert Cazden, *A Social History of the German Book Trade in America*, p. 290, n. 100.

23. St. Louis Public Library, main branch, *Freie Blätter*, Mar. 18, 1851–Mar. 5, 1853. The bound copy has a lithographic portrait of Schmidt (drawn by Theodore Anders, lithographed by A. M. McLean of St. Louis) glued in as

a frontispiece with his vital dates: born Nieder Saltzbrunn, Nov. 28, 1818, died Matanzas, Cuba, Mar. 29, 1853.

24. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, Mar. 18, 1851; also reprint, pp. 1-2.

25. *Freie Blätter*, reprint, p. 1, "The *Freie Blätter* . . . would on its part eagerly attempt to hold itself aloof from battles over specific individuals and factions, preferring to pit principle against principle, and worldview versus worldview."

26. *Freie Blätter*, reprint, p. 1, mentions that the reprint is "in small type, and that except for the title, advertisements and small casual notices, it comprises the entire reading matter of the sold-out issues" [trans. eds.].

27. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 9, May 10, 1851, p. 71.

28. *Freie Blätter*, reprint, p. 12, responding to an attack on the *Anzeiger des Westens* by the *Missouri Republican*.

29. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 36, Nov. 15, 1851, pp. 287-88.

30. For reference to Franz Schmidt and the *Freie Blätter*, see *Der Lutheraner*, vol. 7, no. 16, Apr. 1, 1851, pp. 124-25; no. 17, Apr. 15, 1851, pp. 134-35; no. 18, Apr. 29, 1851, pp. 139-40; no. 21, June 10, 1851, pp. 163-65; no. 25, Aug. 5, 1851, pp. 193-98 (lead article by C. F. W. Walther), p. 200; no. 26, Aug. 19, 1851, pp. 205-6; vol. 8, no. 7, Nov. 25, 1851, p. 55; finally a brief gloat over the internal troubles of the Verein recorded in the *Freie Blätter*, vol. 8, no. 3, Sept. 28, 1852, p. 23.

31. A copy of this pamphlet could not be located at the Concordia Historical Society, Clayton, Missouri. For further bibliographic information see Cazden, *Social History of the German Book Trade in America*, p. 541, n. 125.

32. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 20, July 26, 1851, pp. 158-59.

33. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 32, Oct. 18, 1851, p. 253, letter by F. M. (=Friedrich Münch): "Ich bin kein Knecht des Christenthums, aber die von dessen Stifter verkündeten Wahrheiten sind mir doch nicht weniger werthvoll, als ob sie Bako [Sir Francis Bacon] oder Shakespeare verkündigt hatten." ["I am no slave to Christianity, but the truths proclaimed by its founder are no less valuable to me than if they had been proclaimed by Bacon or Shakespeare."] Reply *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 33, Oct. 25, 1851, p. 257, article signed by Franz Schmidt.

34. The affinity of Börnstein for Heinzen had already been noted over a year and a half earlier by the ever-watchful *Missouri Republican*, vol. 30, no. 112, May 12, 1851, in a letter from an anonymous German entitled "The Anzeiger and the N. Y. Schnellpost." The letter declared that since Börnstein's total takeover of the *Anzeiger*, he had been using Heinzen's articles extensively. Heinzen, "a rank abolitionist" was called "an infinitely better writer." The difference between them was that Börnstein was much more covert about his opinions, and he used Heinzen as a front to get his own radical views in print.

35. See, for example, Friedrich Engels, "Die Kommunisten und Karl Heinzen," in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 4:209-24; Karl Marx, "Die moralisierende Kritik und die kritisierende Moral: Beitrag zur Deutschen Kulturgeschichte gegen Karl Heinzen von Karl Marx," in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 4:331-59, and

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Die grossen Männer des Exils," in Marx and Engels, *Werke*, 8:282–87.

36. Carl Wittke, *Against the Current*.

37. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 39, Dec. 6, 1851, pp. 308–10; no. 40, Dec. 13, 1851, p. 318.

38. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 13, June 5, 1852, pp. 99, 103 [Philadelphia]; no. 22, Aug. 7, 1852, pp. 170–71; no. 23, Aug. 14, 1852, pp. 178–79; no. 24, Aug. 21, 1852, pp. 185–87 [Hermann, Mo.]; no. 25, Aug. 28, 1852, pp. 193–96 [St. Louis]; no. 26, Sept. 4, 1852, pp. 201–4 [Chicago]; no. 27, Sept. 11, 1852, pp. 209–11.

39. *Freie Blätter* vol. 2, no. 42, Dec. 25, 1852, pp. 319–21; no. 43, Jan. 8, 1853, pp. 338–39; no. 45 [should be 44], Jan. 15, 1853, pp. 343–45.

40. See *Missouri Republican*, daily edition, vol. 30, no. 65, Mar. 18, 1851; no. 66, Mar. 20; no. 67, Mar. 21.

41. For the Brossart events, see *Anzeiger des Westens*, daily edition, vol. 16, no. 123, Mar. 15, 1851, first clear description of story, with reference to publication in previous edition (article not found); no. 124, Mar. 16, efforts to win Brossart's release with a court order; no. 125, Mar. 18, doubts begin to set in about the story ("The question now is, whether Mr. Peter Brossart is a swindler or a lunatic"); no. 127, Mar. 20, statement that Brossart had probably been hired by persons unknown to stir up trouble and discredit Börnstein.

42. Heinrich Börnstein, *Fünfundsiebzig Jahre*, 2:106–8; *Anzeiger des Westens*, vol. 16, no. 136, Mar. 30, 1851; account of the first meeting in *Freie Blätter*, reprint, pp. 19–20.

43. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 10, May 17, 1851, p. 79.

44. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 35, Nov. 8, 1851, report of meeting of Nov. 2.

45. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 22, July 9, 1851, advertisement on last page. The school for the south was at the corner of Seventh and Hickory, that for the north at Sixteenth and Wash.

46. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 9, May 8, 1852, report of meeting of Apr. 28.

47. *Missouri Republican*, vol. 30, no. 194a, Sept. 19, 1851, declared the Free Men were not free, "they are completely under the control of Boernstein as the serfs of Russia under the Autocrat."

48. *Missouri Republican*, vol. 30, no. 78, Apr. 2, 1851, p. 2; other, more precise, growth figures are to be found in the *Anzeiger des Westens*, daily edition, vol. 16, no. 185, May 26, 1851: on Apr. 15, at first organization, 55 members; on Apr. 18, 111 members; by May 5, 200 members; and by May 26, 306 members.

49. *Anzeiger des Westens*, daily edition, vol. 16, no. 176, May 16, 1851, p. 3, advertisement for "Deutsche, englische und französische Buchdruckerei des Anzeigers des Westens, Eigenthümer: H. Börnstein und H. W. Gempp." Gempp and Börnstein had bought out the interests of Arthur Olshausen in April 1851 (*Missouri Republican*, daily edition, vol. 30, no. 96, Apr. 23, 1851). Gempp (born Dec. 26, 1798, in St. Louis since 1836) died on May 31, 1851; see *Anzeiger des Westens*, vol. 16, no. 190, June 1, 1851; and Börnstein became the sole owner of the company after buying out Gempp's widow.

50. *Missouri Republican*, vol. 30, no. 194, Sept. 19, 1851, p. 2.
51. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 7, Apr. 24, 1852.
52. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 22, Aug. 7, 1852, p. 171, report of special meeting of July 30.
53. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 23, p. 179, Aug. 14, 1852, report of special meeting of 10 Aug. 10.
54. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 27, Sept. 11, 1852, p. 211, report of special meeting of Aug. 31, 1852; pp. 214–15, a "Concordia-Klubb [*sic*] der freien Männer" was briefly formed on Sept. 8 to isolate the protesters.
55. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 30, Oct. 2, 1852, pp. 233–35.
56. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 32, Oct. 16, 1852, p. 249. Despite the seizure, both buildings were back in the hands of the Verein in a matter of a few days.
57. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 32, Oct. 16, 1852, pp. 249–50: "Both endeavors hindered the Verein from the *purity of its original intention*: education and spiritual enlightenment" [trans. eds.; emphasis in original].
58. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 32, Oct. 16, 1852, p. 251, report of special meeting of Oct. 10.
59. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 33, Oct. 23, 1852, pp. 260–61, new constitution; p. 263, report of meeting of Oct. 16.
60. *Missouri Republican*, daily edition, vol. 30, no. 204, Sept. 1, 1851; also no. 206, Sept. 3, 1851.
61. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 19, July 17, 1852, p. 147.
62. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 42, Dec. 25, 1852.
63. E. D. Kargau, *St. Louis in Früheren Jahren*, pp. 286–93, for the entire narrative on the Freie Gemeinde, which confused the origins of the Freie Gemeinde with that of the Verein Freier Männer. Kargau believed that Franz Schmidt had been a founder of the Freie Gemeinde, and even that the Freie Gemeinde had grown out of the Verein Freier Männer, though the Freie Gemeinde was in fact half a year older. For the records of the Freie Gemeinde, see Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri-St. Louis, collection 37, Protocols of the *Freie Gemeinde von Nord-St. Louis*, p. 5, Protokoll I, Nov. 6, 1850 (first meeting); see also the caustic comment on the establishment of the Freie Gemeinde by *Der Lutheraner*, vol. 7, no. 10, Jan. 7, 1851, pp. 75–77. There is a response to an article of the *Freie Blätter* calling for a national conference of Freie Gemeinden in the Freie Gemeinde Protocols, p. 18, Protokoll VIII, July 13, 1851.
64. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 19, July 19, 1851, p. 151, notice of meeting of the Verein of July 18, mentioning the visit of Dr. T. Moore, city councilman of the Second Ward and the naming of committees to explore possible future cooperation.
65. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 30, Oct. 4, 1851, pp. 233–34, and subsequent issues.
66. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 19, July 17, 1852, p. 147, "Report on the last investigation of the St. Louis independent confessional high school for boys and young men."

67. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 1, no. 31, Oct. 11, 1851, p. 247.
68. Kargau, *St. Louis in Früheren Jahren*, pp. 288–93.
69. *Missouri Republican*, daily edition, vol. 30, no. 187, Aug. 8, 1851, and following.
70. *St. Louis Evening News*, daily edition, vol. 1, no. 92, Aug. 4, 1852, reporting results of the Aug. 2 election, showed that Thomas Hart Benton won over the Whig candidate heavily in the German-dominated wards, while carrying the total congressional district by a mere five hundred votes. Although Börnstein's boast that the total electorate for Benton was German was certainly overstated, the Germans probably gave him the margin of victory in an extremely close race.
71. Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, University of Missouri-St. Louis, collection 37, folder 1: *Freie Gemeinde Protocols*, p. 21, Protokoll IX, July 20, 1851: "Herr Franz Schmidt hatte die Einladung, eine Festrede zu halten, angenommen, wenn seine jetzt leidende Gesundheit es dann erlauben werde." [Mr. Franz Schmidt had accepted the invitation to give the main speech, if his then poor health would permit it.] [trans. eds.]
72. *Freie Blätter*, vol. 2, no. 44, Jan. 15, 1853, p. 343; *Anzeiger des Westens*, weekly edition, vol. 18, no. 12, Jan. 12, 1853: "Die Redaktion der 'Freien Blätter' wird während Schmidts Abwesenheit von uns geführt werden—und was Schmidts so schön blühende Mädchenschule betrifft, so werden fähige Lehrer und Frau Schmidt selbst die Anstalt in demselben Geiste und Sinne fortführen, bis Schmidt uns und seinen Schülerinnen wiedergegeben ist." [The editing of the *Freie Blätter* will be taken on by us during Schmidt's absence. And as far as Schmidt's thriving Girls' School is concerned, capable teachers and Mrs. Schmidt herself will carry on the leadership of the institution in the same spirit until Schmidt is returned to us and his school girls.] [trans. eds.]
73. *Anzeiger des Westens*, vol. 18, no. 19, Mar. 12, 1853, p. 1, letters dated Jan. 31, Feb. 2, Feb. 4.
74. *Anzeiger des Westens*, weekly edition, Apr. 23, 1853, article dated Apr. 17. Börnstein promised a detailed obituary, which I have not been able to find.
75. *Anzeiger des Westens*, weekly edition, vol. 18, no. 28, May 14, 1853, p. 4, letter dated Apr. 12.
76. The volume is missing vol. 1, nos. 2–7 (which are largely covered by the reprint), 12–14, 18, 24–26, 48–50; vol. 2, nos. 6, 14, 17(a), 18, 20–21, 36–37, 40.

John B. Jentz

The 48ers and the Politics of the German Labor Movement in Chicago during the Civil War Era: Community Formation and the Rise of a Labor Press

During the Civil War a vital interethnic labor movement emerged in Chicago, as in other major northern cities. The Chicago movement combined Irish, German, British, and native-born workers in numerous unions and created a city central body that published its own labor paper. After the war this labor movement made Chicago the center of a national campaign for the eight-hour day. Although the eight-hour movement failed after the defeat of a massive strike in May 1867, organized labor regrouped and even expanded in some industries afterwards. Yet after 1867 there were really two organized movements, one German- and the other English-speaking. By 1869 each had its own city central organization of constituent unions as well as its own labor paper—the *Workingman's Advocate* and *Der Deutsche Arbeiter*. By the early 1870s—and for different reasons—both of these city central organizations had disbanded, while their member unions were considerably weakened. The first era of Chicago labor history had ended, and a new one would begin with the onset of the depression of the 1870s.

This paper examines the first era of Chicago labor history from the perspective of German workers and the 48ers who usually spoke for them in the public arena. Its goal is to shed new light on the complex interrelationship of class and ethnicity in American labor history, particularly by tying the history of German workers to the evolution of their ethnic group and its politics. Basically it argues that during the 1850s and 1860s Germans in Chicago—workers included—were preoccupied with building the social, cultural, and economic institutions of their community. These institutions included not only churches and

ethnic clubs but also manufacturing enterprises, labor organizations, and newspapers. During this period 48ers led German labor politically, while the actual organization of unions and benefit societies was done by German craftsmen, often in cooperation with skilled workers from other ethnic groups.

The ability of the 48ers to lead German workers politically rested in large measure on the authority they derived from their critical role in defining German-American ethnicity and founding the key institutions of German Chicago. Newspapers, and particularly the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, were critically important to the 48ers in this role because the papers served as vehicles for defining ethnic identity, articulating common concerns, and mobilizing the group politically in defense of its interests. In this period these interests were threatened with peculiar force by nativist and temperance movements. When the period of community formation ended, so too did much of the political authority of the radical 48ers over German workers. The end of the period was marked by the founding of German-language newspapers rivaling the *Staats-Zeitung*, including labor's *Der Deutsche Arbeiter*.

German 48ers, German Workers, and the Origins of the Chicago Republican Party

The leadership of the 48ers in defining German-American ethnicity amidst the nativist and temperance agitation of the 1850s is well known. Chicago too had its short-lived Know-Nothing political victory in 1855; and its German community mobilized in opposition, with inspired leadership provided by 48ers. Between 1853 and 1856—when Know-Nothing activity was at its peak—48ers took over the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, making it into a major daily; and they helped to organize the central secular institutions of the German community—the Turner society; the men's choir; the German Society, an immigrant aid organization; and German House, a central meeting hall. Although the 48ers had considerable aid from others, they played a catalytic role because of their energy, organizational skills, and cultural achievements, as well as the opportunities of the moment: the nativists had created an unease among all Germans, who looked for the leadership that the 48ers provided. In this crisis of the mid-1850s the secularity of the 48ers aided them in their claim to found institutions—such as German House—open to all Germans and not identified with any one religious or political group. To the extent that the 48ers advocated free thought and the policies of the emerging Republican party this claim

proved suspect. Also well known to students of German-American history is the role the 48ers played in leading a substantial German element—including a significant group of German craftsmen—into the new Republican party.¹ This German constituency helped make the Republican party competitive in a city that had been overwhelmingly Democratic.

Less well known is the 48ers' attitude toward labor while they were doing so much to shape German-American ethnicity and politics. The left-wing of 48er opinion was expressed at a national meeting organized by Karl Heinzen in Louisville during March 1854. Nativism was rampant in the land; and the Kansas-Nebraska Act had just been passed, making the extension of slavery into the territories the central political question of the moment. The result of this meeting was the "Louisville Platform," which provided a controversial touchstone for German-American politics during the Civil War era.² The Louisville platform divided the 48er radicals from their more moderate brethren by its advocacy of racial and sexual equality, as well as by its tone of dissatisfaction with American political institutions which did not live up to the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence. Although the issues of slavery and nativism were the central ones, the platform also had a section on "measures for the welfare of the people" in which it addressed the condition of labor.³

There were two fundamental presuppositions of this section of the platform—first, that labor and capital were antagonistic and, second, that laboring for a capitalist was a temporary necessity taken up because labor lacked sufficient capital to engage in its own enterprise. Both ideas were also current in American labor circles during the Jacksonian era; and the ideology of the Republican party, which was to emerge in a few years, assumed that wage labor was not meant to be a permanent station in life.⁴ The Louisville platform took a distinctive turn, however, in recommending state intervention to aid labor in its contest with capital if a "just agreement" could not be reached. As the "arbitrator of all contending interests," the state should mediate the claims of both parties, setting a minimum wage equal to the value of labor and a maximum workday of ten hours. The state should also aid associations of working men with credit banks and government contracts. These labor planks of the Louisville platform must be understood, however, within the context of its overarching goal, which was to provide a political program behind which all Germans could unite under 48er leadership. Although the radicalism of the program doomed this endeavor from the start, both the platform and

the larger enterprise of creating a left-leaning German political movement in American politics remained significant for the history of labor, particularly in Illinois.

Labor was also on the program of a subsequent meeting in 1854 held in Peoria, Illinois. It was designed to build local support for the political agenda enunciated in Louisville. The initiative for the Peoria meeting came from the political circle around the Chicago-based *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, which hoped to form an umbrella organization of liberal associations and Free Men's organizations from throughout the state.⁵ The support of the group around the *Staats-Zeitung* for the Louisville platform illustrates the strong presence of radical 48ers in Chicago and helps explain their effort to speak to labor, and especially to the city's constituency of radical craftsmen. The political program adopted at Peoria was similar to the Louisville platform, placing slavery first on the list of priorities but also advocating religious freedom, free high schools, the ten-hour day for laborers, and easier suffrage requirements.⁶ A permanent organization was set up, based at the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* and composed almost entirely of members of its radical circle of 48ers. When the leadership council of this organization met in July 1854, five Chicago associations were represented, three of them recently founded and dominated by 48ers—the Turners, a liberal singing society, and the local "Free Men's" association. The other two were the associations of carpenters and tailors.⁷

Recently formed craft associations with benevolent features, the carpenters' and the tailors' associations were the two most significant German labor organizations then in the city.⁸ Their presence illustrates the popularity among craftsmen of the radical republicanism originating in the 1848 Revolution.⁹ The actions of the July meeting in Chicago included an appeal to this labor constituency in its call for a stronger organization of the "free societies." The meeting called for workers in the plants of Chicago and other cities to organize themselves and then unite in a larger organization.¹⁰ In an acknowledgment of the independent position of labor within German Chicago, the workers were not asked simply to join the umbrella organization of "Free Associations of Illinois, but rather to cooperate with it." This call to workers was a recognition of labor organizational activity that had taken place in Chicago in 1853 and 1854, when several crafts had witnessed disputes over prices paid to journeymen.¹¹ In April of 1854, for example, the German tailors, in association with workers of other nationalities, had formulated a price list which was accepted by most of their employers and formed the basis of labor relations in the trade until 1862.¹² Contemporary with similar and more substantial activity in other cities,

this labor organizing in Chicago did not produce a set of unions with a core of German journeymen but rather the craft associations of the carpenters and tailors.¹³

In the mid-1850s the most significant facts about German labor in Chicago were that it had several distinct and substantial organizations and that its needs were recognized and integrated into the politics of the 48ers, particularly through the efforts of the city's strong 48er left. The participation of German labor in German liberal and radical politics meant that the history of the 48ers related directly to the city's German-American labor history. Yet the 48ers' most important agenda was not the sustenance of labor, not even the destruction of slavery, but rather the creation of a German presence in American politics under their leadership. Radicals were more inclined than liberals to advocate a distinct party that would promote goals such as those expressed in the Louisville platform. Liberal and moderate 48ers were more inclined to make their presence felt within the Republican coalition. In the late 1850s, however, these tendencies were submerged by the overwhelming significance of the antislavery issue for all 48ers and by the necessities of organizing a strong local Republican party.¹⁴

Chicago's 48ers had a chance to demonstrate their leadership during the crisis of unemployment created by the Panic of 1857. When, like other national groups, the Germans met in November to organize their relief committees, the editor of the *National Demokrat*, Chicago's German-language Democratic paper, made a challenging and politically volatile proposal: he urged that a committee of five laborers call on the city council and demand work or bread.¹⁵ This proposal was similar to demands posed by workers in eastern cities to their city governments during the economic crisis.¹⁶ In Chicago the proposal for bread or work became a partisan as well as an ethnic issue because it was to be presented to the city's first Republican city council on the initiative of a foreign-language Democratic newspaper.

The editor of the *Demokrat* was challenged in the November German meeting by Hermann Kreismann. He was a member of the 48er circle at the *Staats-Zeitung* who had just been appointed city clerk by Chicago's first Republican mayor.¹⁷ His appointment was one indication of his politics, more moderate than those of some of his colleagues. Appealing to American legal traditions, Kreismann said that the city government had no authority to provide work or relief. Unlike the European despotisms they had fled, the government here "does not interfere by unequal taxation, unjust laws and the establishment of favored classes, in times of prosperity," and thus "it cannot be expected to act as the nursing mother in times of distress."¹⁸ Appealing

to German ethnic pride, he acknowledged that something had to be done and called on his countrymen to take care of their own through voluntary associations. In this way the already high reputation of the Germans among the Americans would increase even more. Kreismann won this verbal duel, and the demand for work or bread was not made to the city council by representatives of the German meeting.

The implications of Kreismann's victory were several and profound. First of all, a 48er himself, he effectively asserted the leadership of the 48ers over Chicago's German workers. The existing German craft organizations of the tailors and cabinetmakers already sympathized with the 48ers. Yet this meeting represented a broader constituency, not necessarily organized into labor institutions but conscious of labor's needs in a time of economic crisis. The fact that Kreismann could determine the outcome of this meeting illustrated the broad influence of the 48ers even among unorganized workingmen. When the Chicago labor movement did emerge in 1863 and 1864, its most prominent German political leader was Edward Schlaeger, another 48er, although Schlaeger was a radical and Kreismann a moderate. The result of the November 1857 German meeting also had significant ideological implications. Asserting a responsibility for the state in determining the relations of capital and labor, the Louisville platform could have provided ample rationale for demanding work or bread from the city government.¹⁹ Since he was a moderate, it is no surprise that Kreismann failed to use this means to assert state responsibility for the unemployed, but the city's radical 48ers did not either. At this time the exigencies of forming a stable local Republican party took precedence over ideology. The emergence of Schlaeger as a spokesman for labor during the Civil War can be seen as a return of Chicago's radical 48ers to their original position.

Yet, Kreismann's victory aside, something positive had to be done to relieve distress during the winter of 1857; and the 48ers took action within the limits set by their Republican commitments. Rejecting an open political appeal to the Common Council, the 48ers helped German craftsmen found the *Arbeiterverein*, a social and mutual benefit organization. The *Arbeiterverein* was founded within a week of the November meeting called to discuss relief. Combined with the relief efforts of the German Society, the founding of the *Arbeiterverein* constituted German Chicago's main organized response to the crisis caused by the Panic of 1857.²⁰ Patterned after similar groups then developing in Germany, the Chicago *Arbeiterverein* was the most important German labor organization for the next ten, very critical, years.²¹ Its importance, however, transcended its German roots, for it was Chicago's

first effective labor organization that united workers across craft lines. Through the *Arbeiterverein* Chicago's 48ers asserted their leadership over the politics of the city's first German labor movement. The Republican cast they gave to these politics helped insure that the public presence of Germans in Chicago's first labor movement—which had a Democratic coloring—was less than the extent of German participation warranted. At the same time the *Arbeiterverein*'s emphasis on self-help and voluntarism paved the way for future cooperation with the associations of Anglo-American workingmen.

German Labor during the Civil War and Subsequent Eight-Hour Movement

On the eve of the Civil War there were not more than ten labor organizations in Chicago. Apart from the Typographical Union (founded in 1852), the Iron Molders Union (founded in 1857), and the Machinists and Blacksmiths' Union (founded in 1859), they were all ethnically affiliated benevolent societies. A sharp rise in consumer prices during the early war years, combined with a growing labor shortage, quickly transformed this situation. By 1864 Chicago newspapers reported thirteen strikes, three more than the total during the previous three years. Out of this conflict came fifteen new unions.²² For the most part, they were stronger than the temporary, makeshift associations which had been the norm in previous years. Most important, the new unions were multiethnic, the first time in the city's history there had been a broad movement among workers that transcended divisions among nationalities. When, for example, the journeymen coopers held a ball as part of their effort to found an association, their organizing committee was composed of Irish and Germans. During a strike in 1864, the tailors' union met at German House to hear speeches in English and German and then elect its officers, Lawrence Shea and Edward Henderson.²³ During a strike in 1864 the position of the overwhelmingly German bakers was represented within the new Trades Assembly by men named Dooley, Burke, and Shay.²⁴ These leadership choices reflected the unfamiliarity of recently arrived German workers with the language and politics of a foreign land. Overall Chicago's Civil War union movement was led by English-speaking immigrants—British and Irish workers—whose knowledge of both the English language and American political culture gave them an advantage.²⁵ This leadership also helped give Chicago's first labor movement its Democratic political coloring.

While German unionists had been active in the labor movement

from the beginning, significant political leadership for German labor awaited a split among the city's German Republicans over the Frémont candidacy for president in 1864. Although in 1856 the 48ers as a group had been drawn to Frémont, his candidacy in 1864 in opposition to Lincoln divided them into radical and moderate factions. In Chicago the Frémont people were drawn predominantly from the Social Arbeiterverein, a branch of the central Arbeiterverein based in Chicago's heavily working-class Tenth Ward. In late May 1864 the Social Arbeiterverein contributed two of three delegates from the Chicago Arbeiterverein to the pro-Frémont Cleveland convention, which not only broke from the Republican party but also noted the increasing conflict between capital and labor.

The sending of representatives to the Cleveland convention from the Chicago Arbeiterverein split the organization. The more radical group kept the name Arbeiterverein, while the moderates formed an exclusively educational organization.²⁶ As the Frémont candidacy became increasingly hopeless, the radicals in the Arbeiterverein turned toward the city's labor movement. At an August 1864 meeting of the Arbeiterverein, speakers stressed that while politicians divided the people, trade unions "would unite all nationalities, natives and Irishmen and German."²⁷ In September the Arbeiterverein sent five delegates to the Trades Assembly which had been formed in the spring. Edward Schlaeger, one of the 48er radicals, abandoned his recently founded anti-Republican paper, the *Union*, and contributed instead a German-language supplement to the newly formed *Workingman's Advocate*.²⁸ Within its own pages, therefore, the *Advocate* illustrated the interethnic character of the new labor movement. These moves by the Frémonters and Schlaeger, who was also one of them, indicated an alienation from the mainstream Republican party among radical 48ers that aided their participation in the larger English-speaking labor movement.

These radical 48ers in the Arbeiterverein helped keep German labor in Chicago within the English-speaking labor movement after the Civil War. Schlaeger, for example, represented the Chicago Arbeiterverein at the annual convention of the National Labor Union in 1866, where he argued for an independent political initiative by labor.²⁹ The Arbeiterverein actively supported the movement for the eight-hour day, although it saw cooperation as the only permanent solution to the labor question; and German unionists were a substantial part of the parade in support of the eight-hour day and the subsequent strike in May 1867.³⁰

The role of the Frémont faction of the 48ers in providing leadership to German labor in the mid-1860s can be understood in the light of both

the Louisville platform and contemporary developments in Germany. In turning to labor the Frémonters who remained in the Arbeiterverein represented a revival of the social import of the Louisville platform. Their concern with the "social question" was particularly apparent in the statements issued by several meetings held in preparation for the Cleveland convention of 1864.³¹ It is unclear from the existing evidence whether, following the Louisville statement, the radicals in the Arbeiterverein also supported state intervention to adjust the relation between labor and capital, as well as to provide support for labor institutions. Nevertheless, it is likely that the Arbeiterverein supported state aid for the cooperatives, which it saw as the permanent solution to the labor question.

In a larger perspective, the radicals in the Arbeiterverein can be seen within the spectrum of liberal to left opinion in contemporary Germany as defined by historians Shlomo Na'aman and Toni Offermann.³² One can distinguish between liberals and democrats on the German left, the dividing line between the two drawn over the question of whether political change was sufficient to reform society or whether some kind of fundamental social change was needed as well. Democrats, as opposed to liberals, advocated social as well as political change. In turn the democrats divided into "blue" and "red" groups, with the blues more moderate and the reds tending toward Lassallean or Marxist positions. The Arbeiterverein radicals in Chicago were blue democrats who split from their more moderate liberal associates in the German wing of the Republican party, then allied themselves with labor, but stayed within the tradition of labor reform. Their advocacy of fundamental social change, but not revolution, underlay their cooperation with the British and Irish leaders of the Chicago labor movement. Within a few years of the great eight-hour strike of 1867, however, Chicago's blue democrats were replaced by Lassallean red democrats, men such as Carl Klings, who occupied key leadership positions in the new German city central body and in the editorship of its labor paper, *Der Deutsche Arbeiter*. This change in the leadership of German labor in Chicago was symbolized by Edward Schlaeger's return to Germany in early 1872.³³

Two Labor Movements and the End of an Era

These leadership changes at the top of the German labor movement in Chicago should be understood within the context of the maturation of the Chicago German community, not simply as part of the ideological history of the left. The red democrats like Klings were not

simply more radical than the Arbeiterverein group, they were new to a city whose scale and complexity made it substantially different from the booming but modest-sized commercial center that the 48ers like Schlaeger entered in the early 1850s. Chicago's population grew from 30,000 to 300,000 in the twenty years after 1850, and by 1870 it had a significant manufacturing economy. At the same time, class divisions were emerging which would become starkly apparent during the depression of the mid-1870s. Before then ethnic ties were stronger than class conflict, but the class divisions that were developing within German Chicago helped create the conditions for the formation of Chicago's first German labor movement.

By the end of the 1860s the initial tasks of institution building and cultural self-definition, in which 48ers of all shades of opinion had played a prominent role, had been largely accomplished. By then Chicago Germans had a new sense of confidence and legitimacy based on their participation in the Civil War; and the public issues of the era had shifted from slavery and secession—upon which the 48ers provided such important leadership—to reconstruction and the labor question. This paper stresses the economic side of the formation of the Chicago German community, mainly because this aspect of ethnic community building is less well known than the founding of ethnic cultural and social institutions. The development of a large, prosperous, and class-divided German community marked the end of the community formation period.

During the 1860s Chicago experienced a manufacturing boom that began to diversify its predominantly commercial economy. Although in 1870 Chicago's manufacturing economy was still smaller than Cincinnati's, the scale and sophistication of its firms ranked with its rival. Even though, for example, the size of Chicago's manufacturing work force was only 70 percent of Cincinnati's, a higher proportion of Chicago's workers labored in firms with more than fifty employees.³⁴ German entrepreneurs contributed substantially to this manufacturing expansion. In 1870 they actually owned a slightly larger percentage—37.9—of all manufacturing firms than the native-born, although the businesses of the native-born were considerably larger.³⁵ Nonetheless, no other foreign-born group could match the German strength in the manufacturing economy.

German manufacturers dominated several branches of industry. They constituted over half of the businesses and hired over half of the workers in the production of tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, and furniture.³⁶ They also had a substantial presence in other branches of industry—food-processing (not meat-packing), slaughterhouse by-

products, wearing apparel, light metal fabrication, carriages and wagons, construction, and building materials.³⁷ For the history of German labor in Chicago the most important fact was that German manufacturers employed a substantial proportion of their countrymen. In Chicago a German-American labor movement could develop within a German-American world. The strength of this ethnic world gave German workers in several branches of industry the power to sustain their own institutions within a labor movement still predominantly led by Irish, British, and American craftsmen.

By the late 1860s Chicago's 50,000 Germans were stratified along class lines, and German manufacturers constituted a powerful segment of German-American leadership.³⁸ Their rise is best illustrated by the purchase of the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, the bastion of 48er influence, by Anton Hesing, a political boss and manufacturing entrepreneur. Although Hesing's interests were mainly political, he owned Chicago's second-largest planing mill in 1870. Thus it is no surprise that for political as well as economic reasons Hesing was the favorite enemy of Carl Klings, in his capacity as labor editor and radical politician. The founding in 1869 of Klings's *Der Deutsche Arbeiter* is the best example of the emerging class divisions in German Chicago. As the organ of the recently formed German-language city central labor organization, the paper printed on its masthead the names of the constituent unions and labor groups that made up the organization—they included unions and associations of bakers, building carpenters, bricklayers, masons, blacksmiths, shoemakers, furniture workers, and wagonmakers plus the Union veterans.³⁹ The industries in which labor organized had significant numbers of German entrepreneurs, and together these businessmen and the workers they employed created a strong German presence in the Chicago manufacturing economy.

By the late 1860s Germans in Chicago had built a diversified ethnic community in which the talents of the 48ers were no longer sorely needed. The organization of an independent German labor movement in 1868 represented more than an assertion of ethnic pride among workers who had previously deferred to English-speaking immigrants; it was also a recognition that class questions divided German workers from both their American and their German employers. Nowhere was this division more evident than in the development of Chicago's diverse German press. During the Civil War era the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* could legitimately claim to be the voice of German Chicago, as its primarily Democratic competitors came and went. The founding of *Der Deutsche Arbeiter* was a forecast of the future. By the mid-1870s Chicago had not only a labor press that would sustain itself into the twenti-

eth century but also several substantial German dailies which could compete with the former organ of Chicago's 48ers.

NOTES

An earlier version of this essay was presented on December 29, 1988, at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in Cincinnati. Research for the essay was supported in part by a grant from the Research Division of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

1. The best sources on this political history are James Manning Bergquist, "Political Attitudes of the German Immigrant in Illinois," and Bruce C. Levine, "Free Soil, Free Labor, and *Freimänner*."

2. Bergquist, "Political Attitudes of the German Immigrant in Illinois," pp. 147-48; Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution*, pp. 163-65, 184-88; Adolf Eduard Zucker, ed., *The Forty-Eighters*, pp. 173-75.

3. John P. Sanderson, *Republican Landmarks*, pp. 221-22.

4. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, pp. 16-17.

5. Bergquist, "Political Attitudes of the German Immigrant in Illinois," pp. 148-49.

6. Bergquist, "Political Attitudes of the German Immigrant in Illinois," p. 150.

7. *Freeport Deutscher Anzeiger*, July 28, 1854, p. 2.

8. Bessie Louise Pierce, *From Town to City*, p. 166. Both organizations were incorporated by the state in 1855, probably to help them function as benevolent societies.

9. See Levine, "Free Soil, Free Men, and *Freimänner*," as well as his "In the Spirit of 1848."

10. *Freeport Deutscher Anzeiger*, July 28, 1854, p. 2.

11. Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, p. 25; Pierce, *From Town to City*, pp. 160, 165 (n. 66), 166.

12. *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, Oct. 2, 1862, p. 4.

13. On a substantial contemporary labor movement in New York City see Charles Iver Bernstein, "New York City Draft Riots," p. 269.

14. A nativist upsurge usually prompted the German 48ers to start organizing for a distinct German political voice, if not an independent party. Similarly, the less the German 48ers were integrated into the Republican party in their localities the more they longed for their own organization. Since they were less integrated in the East than in the West, the eastern 48ers most often advocated striking out on their own, as was the case, for example, in German discussions preparatory to the Republican convention in 1860. The Frémont candidacy was the most obvious representation of the 48ers' desire for their own distinct voice in American political circles. See Bergquist, "Political Attitudes of the German Immigrant in Illinois," pp. 107-10, 180-81, 293-99; Jörg Nagler, *Frémont contra Lincoln*, pp. 119-59.

15. *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 16, 1857, p. 1. The meeting was attended by three to four hundred people.

16. Amy Bridges, *City in the Republic*, pp. 116–18.

17. Bergquist, "Political Attitudes of the German Immigrant in Illinois," pp. 245–46.

18. *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 16, 1857, p. 1.

19. Sanderson, *Republican Landmarks*, p. 221.

20. *German Workers in Chicago*, p. 36.

21. Although these German associations were repressed along with the rest of the labor movement after the counterrevolution, there was a revival of labor institutions in the German-speaking world during the late 1850s and early 1860s; Dieter Dowe, "Einleitung," in his *Bibliographie zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, p. 63.

22. These conclusions are based on a reading of the daily *Chicago Tribune*, from 1861 through 1864; see especially March through April 1864; also the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, Jan. 24, 1861, and Apr. 6, 1864.

23. *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 5, 1864; *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, Jan. 24, 1861; Apr. 6, 1864.

24. *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, June 9, 1864.

25. The diversity of the leadership comes into clearer focus when we analyze a list of one hundred union leaders of twenty-eight different unions in 1864. As measured by the ethnicity of surname, 40 percent of all leaders were Anglo-American, 31 percent German, and 27 percent Irish. When birthplace was used instead of surname, the percentages were similar.

26. *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, May 26 and June 10, 12, 13, 23, and 29, 1864.

27. *Chicago Times*, Aug. 19, 1864.

28. *Chicago Times*, Aug. 19, 1864; *Workingman's Advocate*, Sept. 17, 1864.

29. John R. Commons et al., *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, 9:128.

30. *German Workers in Chicago*, pp. 254–57.

31. Nagler, *Frémont contra Lincoln*, pp. 154, 208–9.

32. Shlomo Na'aman, *Demokratische und soziale Impulse in der Frühgeschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, pp. 9–10; Toni Offermann, *Arbeiterbewegung und liberales Bürgertum*, pp. 26–34.

33. Actually Schlaeger's withdrawal from active leadership of the labor movement probably began when he took a position as assistant editor of the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* in April 1868; *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, Jan. 20, 1872.

34. Federal manuscript manufacturing census for Chicago, 1870; Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge*, p. 80. In Chicago 53.6 percent of the manufacturing work force labored in firms with more than fifty workers, compared to 49.4 percent in Cincinnati. (The figure for Cincinnati actually refers to firms with fifty or more, not more than fifty.)

35. Federal manuscript manufacturing census for Chicago, 1870. Thus the American firms employed two-thirds of the manufacturing work force, compared to over one-fifth employed by the German-owned businesses.

36. Figures on German manufacturing firms in this paragraph were derived from the federal manuscript manufacturing census for Chicago, 1870.

37. These were branches of industry in which Germans owned at least 20, but less than 50, percent of all firms.

38. Edward Bubnys has found that wealth among Chicago's Germans in 1870 was significantly more evenly distributed than among other national groups in the city, including the native-born. (See Edward Bubnys, "Nativity and the Distribution of Wealth," pp. 101-9.) For several reasons I do not take this to mean, however, that class divisions were not emerging among them. In part the more equitable distribution of wealth found by Bubnys likely resulted from a greater German predisposition to invest surplus income in real estate, a finding derived from a study I did of property holding among Chicago's national groups in 1860. Real estate ownership was more likely to appear in the census returns, if only because it was more difficult to conceal. Thus the distinctive German distribution of wealth probably is more visible because of the Germans' propensity for investing in a form of wealth that was better reported.

Yet I would not dismiss Bubnys's findings as simply an anomaly of the sources he used or the German investment predispositions. Germans in Chicago did profit considerably from the economic boom of the 1860s, and the figures on German manufacturers given in this paper are one indication of that fact. The boom helped produce the German entrepreneurs whose increasing presence and self-consciousness contributed to emergent class divisions in their ethnic community. Another indication of German prosperity in the 1860s is the distinctive distribution of wealth found by Bubnys. Skilled workers in particular earned more, even when they were unable to become small entrepreneurs like so many of their countrymen. Yet these same skilled workers were experiencing most directly the transformation of production through mechanization, division of labor, and increase in firm size that was at the root of so much of the nineteenth-century labor movement. It is a commonplace of labor history that skilled workers—of whom Germans constituted a high proportion—were at the core of nineteenth-century labor organizing. It was this type of German worker who organized in the branches of industry where German entrepreneurs also prospered; it was this type of worker who founded the German city central body and subscribed to *Der Deutsche Arbeiter*.

39. The name of the German city central body was the Deutsche-Arbeiter-Central-Schutz-und-Unterstützungs-Verein. The furniture workers were included on the masthead as the United Carpenters.

The German Press and Working-Class Politics in Gilded-Age Philadelphia

Ever since the rise of industrialization in the United States, observers have sought to explain why working-class militancy—so potent at the workplace—has rarely been transmitted to politics. Of course, answers range from roast beef (i.e., the standard of living) to professional mass electioneering and include many variations.¹ No area has posed more of a challenge, however, than the conflicting messages of ethnicity and class. Working-class formation in America was a complex and tedious process which partially consisted of sifting through immigrant and indigenous radical cultures for an idiom of class expression. Most wage earners had an outlook shaped by a roughly equal attachment to their participation in an ethnic, racial, or religious community and to their experience as workers in an industrial economy. Dynamic and uneven capitalist development further complicated those loyalties. For instance, the experience of an Irish-Catholic weaver differed greatly from that of an Irish-Catholic machinist. Nevertheless, as ethnicity fragmented workers, class fractured immigrant communities.²

The immigrant press reflected the complexity of competing loyalties. In many instances, the ethnic press could encourage group solidarity through language, schools, ties to the homeland, and even social, economic, or cultural initiatives in urban politics. In other cases, ethnic newspapers assisted the assimilation or accommodation of upwardly mobile immigrants by instructing and modifying ethnic culture to blend into America's acquisitive, individualistic values. Less frequently, Irish and German newspapers championed an assimilation of a different sort—one rooted in working-class solidarity. Newspapers

like the *Irish World* or the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* maintained important ties to the largely wage-earning ethnic community while advocating class solutions to the unequal distribution of wealth and power in the United States.³

Consequently, we cannot talk about the impact of the German-language press on working-class politics as if it was monolithic. In Gilded Age Philadelphia, there were German newspapers of all three varieties; all tugging at the loyalties of the German-American working class. This paper will look at the role those newspapers played at two periods of widespread labor conflict—the 1872 eight-hour strikes and labor's great uprising of 1886—and explore the complex intersection of ethnicity and working-class formation. In 1872 when no pro-labor German-language newspaper existed in Philadelphia, the press actually functioned to break down ethnic solidarity in favor of class unity. By 1885, a radical pro-labor German paper existed. However, its ideological stance helped fragment working-class political initiatives. Perhaps these episodes can suggest some of the difficulties in transposing labor militancy into class politics.

A significant German presence in Philadelphia stretched back into the colonial era. The city's industrial base, with its bewildering variety of job opportunities, made it a desirable location for German immigrants well into the nineteenth century. Although Germans were outnumbered by the Irish by more than two to one in 1850, German immigration actually grew at a faster rate over the next three decades. If nearly three of every ten Philadelphians were either first- or second-generation Irish by 1880, two more were German. More important, Germans came better prepared to control many of the more highly paid crafts comprising the city's occupational market. Particularly in the light consumer-goods industries—shoes, bakery products, clothing, textiles, and furniture—Germans often dominated or at least matched the native-born population.⁴

German immigrants too, came better prepared for participation in working-class activism, especially since the labor movement grew from among many of the crafts in which Germans were disproportionately represented. More than just an artisanal background was necessary to fashion a movement, however. Germans had also absorbed a political consciousness forged in the labor unrest of the 1830s and the revolution of 1848 and nourished in the various republican and radical programs of such artisans as Berlin craftsman Stefan Born. In the 1850s, Philadelphia attracted numerous German immigrants who immediately set out to revive their revolutionary republicanism and anticlerical rationalism in their new home.⁵

Throughout the decade leading up to the Civil War, German immigrants fused their ideological traditions to the free-labor political culture of Northern industrial workers. In 1850, led by socialist tailor Wilhelm Weitling, German-American artisans convened a Workingmen's Congress in Philadelphia which adopted the slogan "equal rights and duties." Meanwhile, German craftsmen and their families built an associational network around fraternal orders, building and loan societies, recreational organizations, and political clubs. Especially in the Turnvereine, plebeian organizations devoted to physical fitness, workers developed political notions about the "slave power," linking their dislike for Southern agrarians to their earlier conflict with the Prussian landed aristocracy. Although Germans split on their opposition to slavery, those associated with the working class "assumed leadership roles in the political and military mobilization" against the South, according to historian Bruce Levine. From the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act through the conclusion of the Civil War, German immigrants' "equal rights" ideas attached them to a political culture galvanizing Northern workingmen around the Union cause.⁶

The German-language press in Philadelphia divided over the issue of slavery. The *Freie Presse* took up free labor and equal rights, asserting that it would be advantageous to Northern workingmen. The *Demokrat*, on the other hand, clung to its suspicion of state intervention and centralized government. Ironically, the *Demokrat* was edited by ex-48ers, who one would expect to be more sympathetic to the cause of free labor, but they had also witnessed the power of a centralized state. Meanwhile, Friedrich Thomas, editor of the *Freie Presse*, was a liberal, a freethinker who had emigrated in 1837 and had not experienced the politics of 1848. He adopted the full Republican platform of free labor, a more active state, and high tariffs in the interest of German-American craftsmen.⁷ In the postwar era, however, both papers lost contact with the immigrant working class. As new middle-class leaders came to dominate the German community's institutions, they offered the politics of ethnic brokerage to a community increasingly divided along class lines. Meanwhile, old 48ers who had risen to prosperity, like pianomaker Wilhelm Candidus, adopted a more conservative political line.⁸

After the Civil War, German workers felt the dual pinch of declining real wages and the transformation of the labor process. Wages failed to keep pace with war-induced inflation at the same time that employers began to industrialize German-dominated crafts through technological advances and the division of labor.⁹ As standards of living worsened,

German workers began to abandon Republican and Democratic solutions and revive the labor movement. There, they benefited from their connection to the free-labor, equal-rights traditions of the native-born working class.

Indeed, antislavery arguments played a critical role in the formation of the postbellum labor movement. The masthead of the Philadelphia labor weekly, *Fincher's Trades Review*, which read "Eight Hours: A Legal Day's Work for Freeman," must have resonated for German workers witnessing the erosion of their artisanal independence. Similarly, Philadelphia labor leader William Sylvis, head of both the molder's union and the National Labor Union, asserted: "The late war resulted in the building up of the most infamous monied aristocracy on the face of the earth. This monied power is fast eating up the substance of the people."¹⁰ By 1870, German workers in Philadelphia had reestablished strong unions in the metal, building, woodworking, and clothing trades in cooperation with English, Irish, and native-born workers. They also created a forceful political lobby and established both English and German branches of the socialist International Workingmen's Association (IWA) in the city.¹¹

No issue captured the imagination of the labor movement like the eight-hour workday. Proposed as a class issue by a self-educated machinist, Ira Steward, the demand united German and American workers in the traditions of republicanism and equal rights. Steward wrote that the "anti-slavery idea was that every man had the right to go and come at will. The Labor movement asks how much this abstract [right] is actually worth, without the power to exercise it."¹² In the aftermath of the Civil War, workers in Pennsylvania and six other states pressured state legislatures to pass eight-hour laws, but they were riddled with loopholes and largely ineffective. Nevertheless, the issue transcended ethnic particularities, providing the cause for the first major postwar labor confrontation.

Although the eight-hour issue owed much to the American political culture of free labor, it was the German-American working class that pressed the confrontation in 1872. Frustrated by employer avoidance of the law, German-dominated craft unions in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia decided to enforce the law through strikes. As early as October 1871, German-American carpenters and furniture workers began building support among their English-speaking counterparts for a movement to limit the hours of labor. By February 1872, H. B. Van Tronk and Frederick Weissman had already made plans for a strike and visited the English section of the IWA to enlist its backing.¹³ Following the inauguration of German-led eight-hour strikes in New York

and Chicago in May, Philadelphia unionists announced their intention to strike on June 10. At Turner Hall on June 9, Weissman and Anton Koberlein told one thousand furniture workers that they were entitled to the "results of their labor."¹⁴

The origins of the strike demonstrated the commanding influence of German workers; more than four thousand left their shops on June 11, of whom three thousand were in the German-dominated furniture industry. Shortly thereafter, they were joined by German bakers, leather workers, and brewers. The English-language dailies noted that meetings were held in German halls and that they typically adjourned to nearby beer gardens where there was "an unusual indulgence in the beverage of 'der Faderland'[sic]," prompting German rowdiness.¹⁵

Within a week, however, the eight-hour agitation had spread beyond the ethnic community. Commentators could no longer simply attribute the conflict to German radicalism when the campaign was joined by English ship carpenters, native-born craftsmen in the garment trades, and Irish and English building trades workers. Moreover, the leadership was becoming increasingly mixed. Damon Kilgore, a pro-labor Irish lawyer, the Scottish Mr. McKentaugh, and James L. Wright, a native-born garment cutter, became popular speakers at strike meetings, and labor organizers sought out people who spoke both German and English. Similarly, strike rhetoric showed the influence of American constitutionalism and free-labor republicanism. William Derrick, a carpenter, pointed to the eight-hour law and demanded that employers act like "law-abiding citizens"; McKentaugh wanted workers to demonstrate "the manliness to come forward and demand their rights"; and French-born carpenter Victor Drury read from Boston eight-hour leader Ira Steward's resolutions: "the lords of the loom and the lords of the lash are natural allies in the conflict between Freedom and Slavery." At meetings, woodworkers placed their banners on both sides of the American flag.¹⁶

The eight-hour agitation pulled apart the German community just at the point when ethnic leaders were trying to unite immigrants from southern and northern Germany into a single group.¹⁷ Particularly because the strike originated in the furniture industry, where Germans were employers as well as workers, division was inevitable. But the actions of the strikers and employers suggest that class perspectives quickly overwhelmed ethnic unity. When the strike began, workers left their tools, which they still owned, on the shop benches, to reserve their places, expecting the strike to be soon resolved. In short, the workers acted in the manner of traditional artisans. German employers, however, had formed an association which turned a deaf ear

to strike demands. They had already begun transforming the industry through the use of power, new machinery, and the division of labor. By 1872, they could count on being able to replace craftsmen with semiskilled labor. Demonstrating that capital and labor no longer bargained from positions of equal power, employer association president D. B. Slifer said he would close his establishment until September rather than capitulate to the eight-hour movement. Just a week later, employers threatened to throw their workers' tools into the street.¹⁸

Class tensions quickly surfaced during the strike. On June 17, ethnic leader Edward Spoehn spoke against the strike at a meeting in Turner Hall, but was shouted down. The following day, a fight broke out at a German picnic, leading to the arrest of seven men.¹⁹ Strike leader H. B. Van Tronk's rhetoric took on a more class-conscious tone: "the workingman," he claimed, "was being treated like a commodity, which was contrary to man's being a human being." He added that employers were robbing workers of "surplus labor." This Marxian language blended into the strikers' use of American republican traditions of "citizenship."²⁰

Opponents of the strike, however, employed the same fealty to citizenship in the "great republic of the west," demonstrating the various uses of that idea.²¹ Wilhelm Candidus, the ex-radical who by 1872 was a leader of the German community, demanded to address a strike meeting as a worker, a man, and "a free, American citizen." He accused the strikers of "un-American" behavior and encouraged them to meet with their employers "far from the beer barrel." In his amazing speech, Candidus told the strikers that their enemy was big capital, not their local employers, and warned them not to be led by "demagogues and green-horns." Candidus's German speech drew a mixed reaction, but when asked by reporters to translate his remarks into English, he began with a denunciation of the strike in New York which had raised "the red flag of the Commune." At this point the strikers, who had been willing to grant Candidus a hearing, erupted with shouts of "throw him out" and "beat him to death," nearly causing a riot over the way he misrepresented his remarks for the English-language press.²²

Candidus's speech demonstrated the complex role played by German community leaders, a role magnified by the German press. Indeed, much of the strikers' hostility was directed at the pro-employer ethnic press. Both the *Demokrat* and the *Freie Presse* opposed the strikes as damaging to wage earners as well as employers. Eight-hour leaders thus advised Germans to learn English so they could read papers like the *Public Ledger* or the *Age*, which were more favorable to the movement. Such denunciation of the German-language press drew ap-

plause from the strikers but alarmed German editors. The *Freie Presse*, for instance, lampooned the suggestion that workers read the *Age*, which had "shown how indifferent and even contemptible of Germans" it was during the Franco-Prussian War. Candidus added that the strikers' praise of the English-language press showed that they had not read it, for "you have been derided in their reports and attacked in their lead articles." The German press also mocked the Irish and Scottish accents of Kilgore and McKentaugh.²³

Despite the class fissures in Philadelphia's German-America, the strike did not succeed. By June 24, workers realized they were ill prepared for the type of extended conflict necessary to overcome willful employers pursuing class interests. The fact that the employers dominated the ethnic community and its press also made it difficult to draw on ethnic resources to sustain the strike. Finally, city officials played an important role in the strike's failure by arresting organizers on suspicious charges.²⁴ Nevertheless, German-American workers had reached outside their community and joined with English and Irish immigrant and native-born wage earners to establish a formidable eight-hour league through which they expected to pursue the issue when conditions were more favorable. There was also discussion of an independent labor party to wean German workers away from divisive ethnic politics. Unfortunately, the Panic of 1873 and the ensuing depression postponed those initiatives for more than a decade.

The seemingly episodic nature of the agitation, however, should not hide the important changes occurring in the city's German community. Within a decade, sons of German furniture workers were abandoning their fathers' trade, leaving declining handicraft trades to new, less-skilled immigrants. Moreover, the alliances forged by German-American workers in 1872 formed the basis for a greater activism in the 1880s. If Germanness was blurring differences between southern and northern immigrants, new experiences at the workplace were splintering the group in other ways. Indeed, the *Freie Presse* shifted from its anti-labor position in the late 1870s and was actually considered a pro-socialist paper in the 1880s.²⁵

The events of 1872 should also encourage us to reevaluate the role of the German-language press. In many ways, the German-American editors pursued conflicting purposes. They asserted the economic interests of German manufacturers, suggesting they believed in upward mobility as a group assimilation strategy. Yet, at the same time, they stressed a common Germanness when arguing against the mobilization, and assimilation, of German workers into a class movement. Working-class experience, however, left many Germans immune to

the entreaties of the ethnic press. Alliances with non-German workers, appeals to American political traditions, and support from the English-language press appeared to hold out more possibilities than submission to the interests of ethnic community elites. In the long run, the German-language press had to speak to the class perspectives of a growing majority of the group if it was to maintain its important role in the ethnic community.

In the decade following the depression of 1873, the German-American working class increased its importance in Philadelphia. Although still outnumbered by about three to two by the Irish, Germans were spread more evenly throughout the industrial base, particularly as rural-born, unskilled Germans flocked to America in the 1870s and 1880s. They maintained strength in handicraft trades, but expanded disproportionately in the heavy industrial sectors like metalworking and metalmaking. More importantly, while heavily concentrated in ostensibly skilled occupations, they were frequently in industries experiencing the greatest transformation, like shoes or metals, or in trades increasingly prone to sweatshop conditions, like baking, garment-making, or butchering. Thus, German workers attempted to maintain craft occupations in situations where skill mattered less and less, an explosive mix in shaping working-class consciousness.²⁶ Germans in Philadelphia were experiencing industrialization as an erosion of their skilled status, yet they were still armed with the traditions of craft organization.

At the same time, many German immigrants of the 1870s were coming to America steeped in forms of European Marxism and related forms of anarchism, as well as radical politics. They implanted the debates between politically oriented Lassalleans and economically oriented Marxists into the American labor movement, particularly since they were among the most active and politically aware trade unionists.²⁷ The leadership of the Philadelphia section of the Social Democratic Workingmen's party, for instance, demonstrates the importance of the German element. Of the fifteen most active members of the SDWP, nine had German names; two were machinists, four more were shoe and leather workers, the remaining three were middle-class allies. The section sponsored debates, public meetings, and pamphlets to spread its message. When the dramatic railroad strikes occurred in 1877, these German socialists led the propaganda effort on behalf of labor, claiming that "the police have trampled . . . the fundamental principles of this Republic."²⁸

At the center of this German radicalism was the immigrant socialist

press, represented in Philadelphia by the *Tageblatt*, founded in 1877. In fact, several newspapers promoted ethnic versions of the labor movement. The *Irish World*, although published in New York, was widely read in Philadelphia. It praised working-class activism among the Irish while the *Trades* served as a voice for English and native-born trade unionists. As organized labor regrouped from the decimation caused by the depression, these three papers, like the ethnic factions of labor they supported, were more complementary than competitive. They reprinted or printed translations of articles run by the other newspapers and even encouraged workers to support all three. And, despite the different cultures and ideologies comprising working-class activism, all three groups cooperated in labor activities. On July 4, 1879, for instance, organized labor held a giant demonstration and picnic at Saenger Park. Speakers included Damon Kilgore, the Irish labor reformer, Congressman Hendrick Wright, a longtime friend of unions, the Socialist Adolf Douai, who spoke in both English and German, and Jacob Franz, an editor of the *Tageblatt*. Franz's speech, in particular, demonstrated the intricate tapestry of labor movement culture; he asserted: "The emancipation of the working people must be accomplished by themselves. . . . Thus, 'One for all, and all for one!' so help yourselves and only *then* God will help you."²⁹

In many ways, then, working-class experience acted as a force for integration. German and Irish workers learned of American political culture from the Declaration of Independence (which was revised for an 1879 labor gathering), from the antislavery rhetoric which spoke of republican institutions endangered by "monarchical tendencies" and "wage-slavery," and from evangelists like Uriah Stephens and Thomas Phillips who told ethnic audiences of the unique blend of Christian and republican traditions which would carry labor to power. In turn, American workers promoted a mutual adaptation by translating Marx's writings on trade unionism, by applauding the heavily German Socialist Labor party, and by discussing the Lassalleian program of state subsidies for cooperatives.³⁰ As the labor movement rebuilt its power, there seemed to be ample room for a variety of cultures.

The swelling of organized labor's power in the mid-1880s, however, heightened the persistent ideological and cultural differences between ethnic factions of the labor movement. As the great uprising associated with the Knights of Labor pushed Philadelphia's labor membership to 100,000 in 1886, debates over tactics, political activity, and organization took on a new urgency. This occurred just as an infusion of radicalized immigrants pushed the German community to the left. Craft unionists, Knights of Labor, Socialists, and anarchists all presented solutions

to the social problems facing working men and women.³¹ Moreover, these debates were interwoven with ethnic and religious splits, making the stakes seem even higher. In the aftermath of the bomb and riot at Haymarket Square in May 1886, the American public magnified its attention to organized labor. In turn, labor's various factions scrambled to maintain their following and assert their legitimacy.

In Philadelphia, as throughout the country, Germans were the target of much public furor. With spokesmen like Johann Most and radical military clubs like the Lehr- und Wehr-Verein, revolutionary sentiments appeared to thrive among German-Americans. The alleged Haymarket conspirators themselves were principally Germans. Similarly, the German-American working class dominated socialist and anarchist organizations as well as Paineite free-thought associations, all of which were at odds with the republican constitutionalism and millennial Christianity informing much of English and Irish immigrant and native-born labor activism.³² The *Tageblatt* rapidly became the focus of these tensions when it hired a Chicago anarchist, Wilhelm Gorsuch, as an editor and employed printers from the anarchist Gutenberg Bund, after locking out printers from the regular typographical unions. Amid the rising strain, the storm around the *Tageblatt's* actions shattered political cooperation. Different positions in this complicated affair were staked out by competing radical socialist and trade-union factions, which helped to further isolate the German-American Left from such possible working-class allies as the Irish-Americans.³³

Ironically, by reinforcing the radical culture of German-American workers, the *Tageblatt* became more of an impediment to working-class solidarity than the German-language press had been in 1872. In August 1886, after several futile appeals to the *Tageblatt* to hire union printers, the Philadelphia Typographical Union sought a boycott of the paper by the Central Labor Union, a city federation of English and German-speaking unions. German strength in the CLU, however, overrode the appeal, causing English-speaking unions to withdraw. Rapidly, ethnic and political disputes began to spill over to other trades. Following their departure from the CLU, English-speaking unions threatened to cease buying union-label cigars because Cigarmakers' Union leader John Kirchner held anarchist sympathies. By December, the largely German brewery workers had difficulty obtaining non-German support for their strike, and German and non-German cigarmakers scabbed on each other. At a Knights of Labor parade, moreover, the appearance of a "red-flag brigade" aroused the ire of many non-German unionists and pro-labor politicians.³⁴

Especially in the political realm, the *Tageblatt* affair became a divi-

sive force. When various labor groups in the city established a United Labor party in September, German insistence on running socialist candidates rather than pro-labor reformers like lawyer Maxwell Stevenson caused many non-Germans to reject participation in the ULP. Printers' leader David Pascoe, editor of the *Tocsin*, which represented English-speaking unions, denounced the "unholy alliance" of the anarchist "scabs," nine-tenths of whom were not even U.S. citizens.³⁵ In December, the ULP meetings exploded over the seating of the *Tageblatt's* Wilhelm Gorsuch, a former editor of the *Alarm*. Gorsuch's credentials came from an atheist organization, the Friendship Liberal League, not a labor union, and he disrupted the ULP with an attempt to have the words "Fatherhood of God" stricken from the party's platform. While attempts to launch a political campaign floundered, debate within the ULP degenerated to personal attacks; the *Tocsin* called Gorsuch a "bloodthirsty bombthrower," while Kirchner denounced the erstwhile reformer Stevenson as a "bobtail" candidate who defended strike-breakers in his legal practice.³⁶

Needless to say, the ULP campaign ended in dismal failure and labor unity disintegrated. The *Tageblatt* affair, however, continued to reflect the ethnic and political divisions within the working class well into 1887 as other issues arose to widen those chasms. In October 1887, Philadelphia workers again split over candidates, even though this time they had returned to mainstream politics. English-speaking unions lined up behind the Republican candidate for sheriff, William Leeds, who supported several labor measures in the state legislature. German labor unions, however, led by the *Tageblatt* and the brewery workers, threw their support to the Democrats, who opposed the Sunday blue laws and the high-license law, which Germans argued were a direct assault on their employment and recreational opportunities. Most English-speaking unions did not return to a citywide labor federation until the 1890s.³⁷

What do these two episodes reveal about the roles of class experience and the ethnic press in the immigrant community and more specifically about the impediments to a distinctly working-class politics? Obviously, class experience did at times encourage immigrant workers to look beyond their own ethnic group for support and even leadership. In a recent article, David Montgomery has suggested that class consciousness blended with old-world nationalism and American patriotism in ways that defy easy categorization.³⁸ Nevertheless, new terms were entering the political and cultural vocabulary of working-class immigrants, but without wiping clean the old slate.

The ethnic press also resists an easy fit with reigning assimilation-

ist or pluralist perspectives that typify much of ethnic history. The German-language press was not able to simply overwhelm its working-class clientele with the ethnic elite's perspectives. Instead, it played a far more vital role among the German-American working class when it recognized the political and cultural demands of immigrant wage earners. Of course, with large-scale German immigration persisting into the 1880s, continually recomposing the working class, the ethnic press and the labor press interacted in an erratic manner, demonstrating just how difficult it was to translate class experience into an idealized form of class consciousness.³⁹

What the experience of Philadelphia's German community in the Gilded Age appears to suggest is that ethnic and class perspectives overlapped and often competed for the loyalties of immigrant workers. Ethnic elites could ill afford to ignore the realities of working-class life even when labor confronted employers within the same ethnic group. The experience in Philadelphia mirrored that of Milwaukee, where "in politics, as in other organized community life, the frequent emergence of deep internal divisions . . . suggests the limitations of ethnic community."⁴⁰ Similarly, organized labor was trapped in a system where cultural issues often outweighed class interests, forcing the labor movement to tread lightly on subjects of profound importance to many of its members. Especially in the German-American community, the very complexity of the religious, class, and cultural differences among its members may have helped to push it toward dissolution.⁴¹ If these episodes demonstrate any larger principle, it is that politics was a particularly volatile arena for organized labor. Sam Gompers and his allies understood this well; other heterogeneous labor movements, like the racially divided one discussed in Peter Rachleff's study of Richmond, Virginia, learned this at great cost.⁴² What men like Gompers missed, however, was the difficulty of sustaining trade unionism without a proper appreciation of the role of the state.⁴³ This dilemma confronted organized labor for the next fifty years.

NOTES

1. Among the most recent attempts to answer this question, or at least move the discussion to a higher plane, see Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" and the more controversial debates in *International Labor and Working Class History* (ILWCH) starting with Sean Wilentz, "Against Exceptionalism: Class Consciousness and the American Labor Movement" (vol. 26 [1984]); followed by responses in the same volume from Nick Salvatore and Michael Hanagan, and by Steven Sapolsky (vol. 27 [1985]); and ending with a

reply by Sean Wilentz (vol. 28 [1985]). The most complete collection of debates is contained in *Failure of a Dream?*

2. Here, we have been influenced by the excellent work of Richard Oesterreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, and James R. Barrett, "Unity and Fragmentation."

3. The varying roles of the ethnic press in the acculturation of working-class immigrants were considered at a conference in Frankfurt, Germany, Feb. 12–15, 1985. A preliminary report by J. H. M. Laslett appeared in *ILWCH* 28 (Fall 1985): 85–88.

4. For the ethnic composition of Philadelphia's working class, we have relied heavily on two excellent essays: Bruce Laurie and Mark Schmitz, "Manufacture and Productivity," and Bruce Laurie, Theodore Hershberg, and George Alter, "Immigrants and Industry."

5. See the two fine essays by Bruce C. Levine, "Immigrant Workers, 'Equal Rights,' and Anti-Slavery," and "Free Soil, Free Labor, Freimänner."

6. Levine, "Immigrant Workers, 'Equal Rights,' and Anti-Slavery," pp. 40–48; Bruce G. Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, pp. 163–68; Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution*; Maria Wagner, "Representation of America in German Newspapers," pp. 321–30.

7. Lesley Ann Kawaguchi, "Making of Philadelphia's German-America," pp. 384–93.

8. See especially the discussion in Martin Shefter, "Trade Unions and Political Machines." On Candidus and the Philadelphia German community, see *Demokrat*, June 20, 1872; Kawaguchi, "Making of Philadelphia's German-America," pp. 296–303.

9. For descriptions of the transformation of German-dominated crafts in other settings, see Steven Joseph Ross, "Workers on the Edge," chap. 4; Susan E. Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class*; Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, chap. 1.

10. James C. Sylvis, *Life, Speeches, Labors, and Essays of William H. Sylvis*, p. 41; David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, p. 238.

11. Edgar Barclay Cale, *Organization of Labor in Philadelphia*, pp. 42–59; "Minutes of Section 26, Philadelphia," Oct. 23, Nov. 6, 1871, in *International Workingmen's Association Papers* (microfilm ed.), State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, reel 2.

12. David Roediger, "Ira Steward and the Anti-Slavery Origins of American Eight-Hour Theory"; Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, pp. 249–60.

13. "Minutes of Section 26," Nov. 6, 1871; Feb. 19, 1872; Thomas J. Suhrbur, "Ethnicity in the Formation of the Chicago Carpenters Union," pp. 87–90.

14. *Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), June 8–11, 1872; *Demokrat*, June 11, 1872; *Freie Presse* (Philadelphia), June 11, 1872.

15. *Freie Presse*, June 11, 1872; *Demokrat*, June 12, 1872; *Evening Bulletin* (Philadelphia), June 13 and 18, 1872; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 1872.

16. See especially the accounts in the generally pro-labor *Public Ledger*, June 11–25, 1872.

17. Kawaguchi, "Making of Philadelphia's German-America," chap. 6.
18. *Demokrat*, June 13, 1872; *Demokrat*, June 13 and 14, 1872; *Public Ledger*, June 18, 1872.
19. *Evening Bulletin*, June 18 and 20, 1872.
20. *Public Ledger*, June 19–21, 1872; *Demokrat*, June 18–20, 1872.
21. For the appeal of the "great republic of the west" for another immigrant group, see Herbert Gutman, "Labor in the Land of Lincoln."
22. *Demokrat*, June 20, 1872.
23. *Freie Presse*, June 11, 1872; *Demokrat*, June 12–14, 20, 1872; *Public Ledger*, June 12, 1872.
24. On arrests, see in particular the petition sent to the mayor, printed in *Demokrat*, June 14, 1872.
25. For the attempt to unite southern and northern Germans generally, see Kawaguchi, "Making of Philadelphia's German-America." For the change in the *Freie Presse*, see the testimony of Charles Lenz, in *Report of the [U.S. Senate] Committee Upon the Relations Between Capital and Labor*, 4 vols. (Washington, 1885), 1:244.
26. Laurie, Hershberg, and Alter, "Immigrants and Industry," pp. 108–11.
11. For an excellent discussion of the explosive mix of craft traditions and deskilling, see Michael Hanagan, *Logic of Solidarity*.
27. For a survey of these debates, see Stuart Bruce Kaufman, *Samuel Gompers*.
28. "Minutebook, Philadelphia Branch, Social Democratic Workingmen's Party," 1876–77, in Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
29. *Trades*, July 12, Oct. 25, 1879, and passim.
30. *Trades*, May 24, June 29, July 12, Nov. 8, 1879, Jan. 17, Feb. 7, Apr. 17, 1880.
31. See Judith Lazarus Goldberg, "Strikes, Organizing, and Change"; Ken Fones-Wolf, *Trade-Union Gospel*, chap. 3.
32. For Most, see Frederic Trautmann, *Voice of Terror*; for the Lehr- und Wehr-Verein, see Christine Heiss, "German Radicals in Industrial America"; for German radicalism generally, see Paul Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy*, and Henry David, *History of the Haymarket Affair*.
33. *Tocsin* (Philadelphia), Aug. 28, Oct. 2, 1886; "Philadelphia Typographical Union, Minutes," Oct. 16, 1886, in Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Excellent background information on the *Tageblatt* affair is available in *The Samuel Gompers Papers*, vol. 2: *Early Years of the American Federation of Labor*, pp. 25–26, 37. The affair can be followed in the pages of three New York newspapers: *Der Sozialist*, Mar. 13, 21, 28, Apr. 10, 24, 1886; the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, Mar. 3, 6, 8, 13, 15, 30, 31, Apr. 1, 2, 9, 1886; and the *Deutsch-Amerikanische Buchdrucker-Zeitung*, Jan. 15, Feb. 1, 15, Mar. 1, 15, Apr. 1, 15, May 1, 15, June 1, Oct. 16, Nov. 1, 16, Dec. 16, 1886, Jan. 16, Feb. 1, 16, Mar. 1, 16, May 1, June 1, 16, 1887.
34. *Tocsin*, Sept. 4, 2, Oct. 16, Nov. 13, Dec. 4, 1886, Jan. 8, 29, 1887.

35. *Tocsin*, Oct. 16, 23, 30, Nov. 13, 1886.
36. *Tocsin*, Dec. 4, 11, 18, 1886. For similar political splits in other cities, see Bruce C. Nelson, "'We Can't Get Them to Do Aggressive Work'"; Oestreicher, *Solidarity and Fragmentation*, chap. 6; Ross, "Workers on the Edge," chap. 10.
37. *Tocsin*, Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 15, 29, Nov. 5, 1887. This type of cultural division supports the analysis presented by the ethnocultural political historians. See, for instance, Paul Kleppner, *Cross of Culture*.
38. David Montgomery, "Nationalism, American Patriotism, and Class Consciousness."
39. See the interesting points on this issue suggested by Herbert Gutman and Ira Berlin, "Class Composition and the Development of the American Working Class," pp. 380-94.
40. Kathleen Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, p. 224.
41. Conzen, *Immigrant Milwaukee*, p. 228.
42. Peter Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South*. See also Barrett, "Unity and Fragmentation."
43. Christopher L. Tomlins, *The State and the Unions*, chap. 3.